

# JIVAN

News and Views of Jesuits in India

March 2016



## *The Hunger for Depth*

**Restructuring**  
Formation

**Village Teacher**  
who changed his village

**Women's role**  
in REAP

# Paradise

BY KINLEY TSHERING, SJ

*The tree of life shimmered  
Inviting and promising life  
But Man chose the evil fruit  
Shame and guilt came along  
Man yearned for yesteryears  
The innocence of eternity  
Paradise of yore.*

*Again and again  
Man chose death over life  
Heaven cried once again  
One Man bore the pain  
The Cross became the Tree of life  
For us paradise to gain  
Paradise on earth.*

*The tree of Knowledge blooms  
Shadow and light surround it  
Man must wake up and freely  
Choose the heavenly kingdom  
And In humility beg to hear  
"Today you will be with me in paradise."  
Paradise in our hearts.*

*Fr Kinley Tshering, SJ, is the Provincial of Darjeeling Province.*

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Let's see if you will qualify for this important job.

You are a man, a male - as all Jesuits are. As a member of an Order meant exclusively for men, can you show, by your words and actions, that the Church is truly a loving mother?

The Church is a mother because she gives birth to new children in the faith. She is a mother because she nourishes the faith of her children. When her children go away and commit blunders and later repent and return, she offers God's forgiveness, enabling them to begin a new life. Think of what will happen if people cannot experience the Church as a loving mother. They would not have a sense of belonging, they wouldn't believe that they too are a part of this wonderful worldwide family.

This is the first requirement. Tell me if you can fulfill this requirement.

The second one is crucial. Will you find time to sit at the confessional and hear the confessions of people? If you'd say, 'Hey, I'm a professor. I won't have time for confessions. That's for parish priests,' this job is not for you. You can continue to be a professor as long as you can, but this job..., sorry, it is not for you.

If your priestly identity is really important to you and so if you will find time to sit at the confessional, we can talk about the third requirement. I don't know about your temperament. Whatever it is, you cannot be - can never be - rude and rough with those people who come to talk to you of their sins and wait for your absolution. If you have been doing just that till now, you must understand that you have not been serving Christ and his Church, but have been actually doing a disservice to them and to those people who came to you for confession.

You know why? People see you at the confessional, yes, but it is Christ who welcomes them, it is Christ who listens to them, it is Christ who forgives them, and it is Christ who blesses them, saying 'go in peace'. You are just his minister, his servant. You can't afford to be rude or rough for another important reason. You know you too are a sinner. We all are. So you too stand in need of being forgiven by him. What you are expected to be at the confessional, therefore, is simply to be a

"channel" of his mercy.

You should remember it is not easy to face another person and confess your sins to him. You feel ashamed, you feel embarrassed. Like Adam and Eve who realize they are naked, and like Noah who realizes he got drunk, and so didn't know he was naked, those who come to you seeking the assurance of God's forgiveness, feel ashamed, and so don't know what to say, and how to say it. So you need to understand not merely what they are saying but also what they are not saying, what they are struggling to say.

You must be able to see in their hearts their deep desire for forgiveness. It comes from God. It is God's grace that brings about this desire for mercy and forgiveness - a nostalgia for God, his house, his love. They come to the confessional, fully confident that they will be welcomed, understood, forgiven and supported. You should have the eyes to recognize all these in those who come to you.

Sometimes you may have people who want to give up their old ways and change, but feel they are unable to. They don't want to be away from the Father's house and they are ready to do whatever they can to live in his house as his children, but they fail again and again. You can't be judgemental, you can't be harsh with these people, as if you yourself are immune to sin. Like Shem and Japheth, Noah's sons, who covered their drunken, naked father with his cloak, you need to cover these people with the mantle of God's mercy.

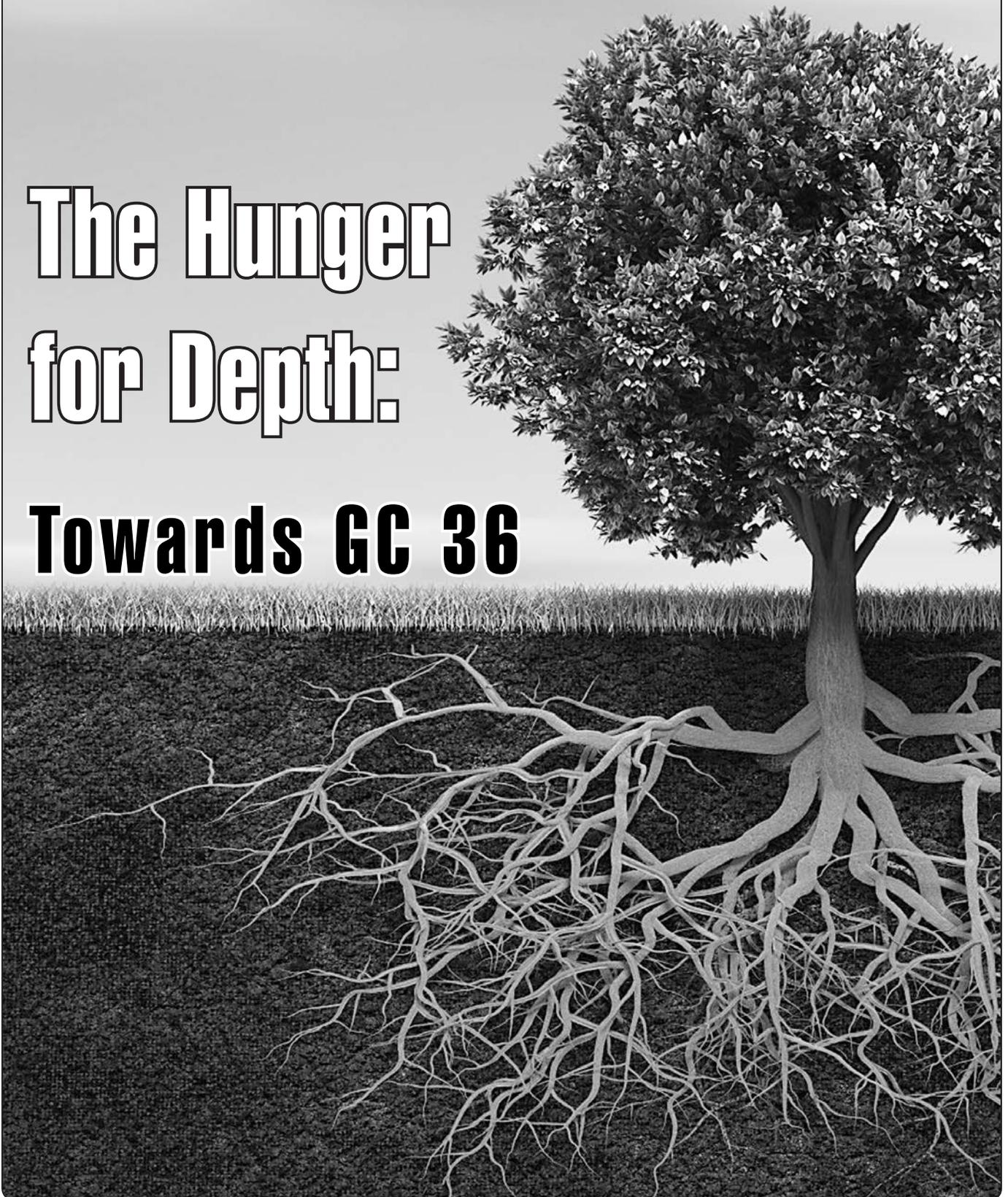
If you manage to be a confessor according to the heart of Christ in whose name you forgive, people will no longer feel ashamed and experience once again the joy of being with him, being at home.

If you fulfill all these requirements, or if you promise all these then you can have this job, this responsibility - being a Missionary of Mercy.

I should tell you now that what you have read till now is not exactly mine. It is what Pope Francis said to about 650 priests (out of 1,000) chosen by him to be 'missionaries of mercy' when he met them on 09 Feb '16. The ideas are all his. I have just retold them in my own way.

This Lent, this Easter, may he make us all missionaries of mercy! - M.A.J.A.

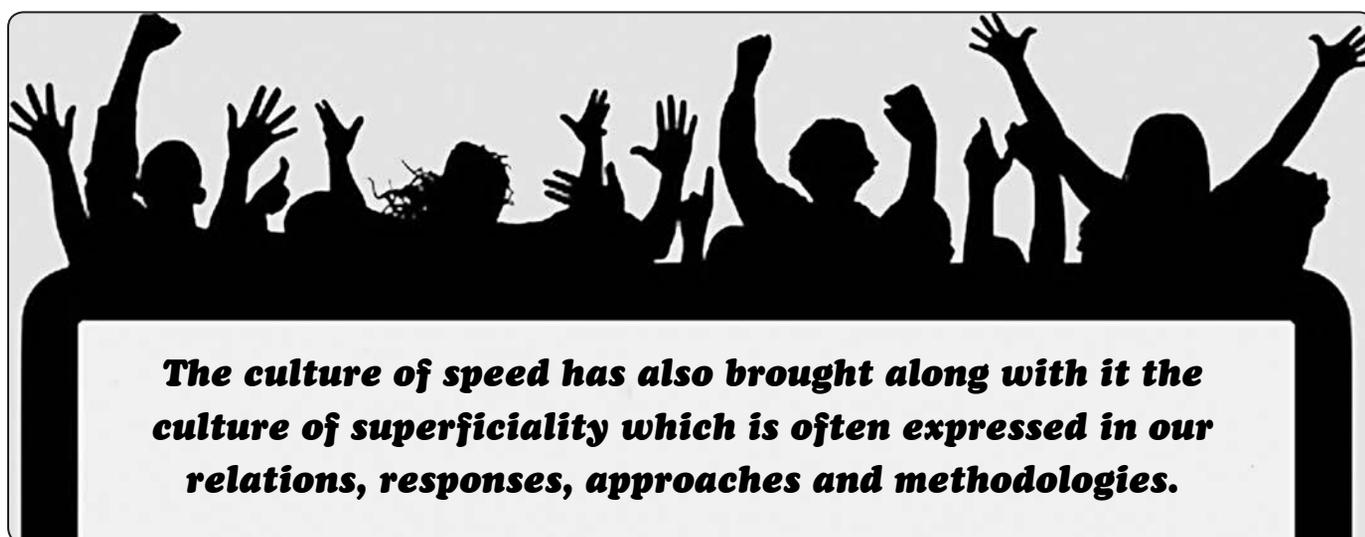
# The Hunger for Depth: Towards GC 36



BY PAUL D'SOUZA, SJ

When Fr General convoked the 36<sup>th</sup> General Congregation on 8 Dec 2014, he asked the worldwide Society to come up with responses to a specific question: "Meditating on the call of the Eternal King, what do we discern to be the three most important calls that the Lord

and within, one unmistakably finds elements of what can be broadly called the present culture - behavioural patterns, belief systems, values, and ideologies that operate below the conscious levels that indicate absence of depth. The negative dimensions of such 'culture' steadily become collective, turning them into the ethos and norm for collective practices. The allure and attractiveness of such dimensions often make daily life easy and comfortable. One enjoys being on the surface and shorelines. Thus, the majority adapts to them, makes them their own and supports them. The negativities of such culture are often challenged by a few, who have the wisdom to look into the depth and courage to initiate practices now termed as 'counter culture'. It is their hunger for depth and what they find in return, that makes it possible to differ substantially from the 'mainstream' values and norms. Thus, the call for depth is an invitation to stimulate further reflection, considering both the realities within and



**The culture of speed has also brought along with it the culture of superficiality which is often expressed in our relations, responses, approaches and methodologies.**

makes to the whole Society today?" The responses from Jesuits were synthesized by 'the Coetus Praevius' and have been communicated to the Society in the document, *Relatio Praevia* for prayerful reflection. In his letter to the whole Society Fr General mentions the six calls and invites us to "strike into the deep" to encounter God, the world, others, and ourselves, through four 'depth' dimensions, i.e. in affective depth, in intellectual depth, in effective depth and in collaborative depth. As he has often insisted, Fr General once again emphasizes the need for depth.

#### **Why hunger for depth?**

As one seriously looks around

beyond as a move towards GC 36 collectively.

#### **The immediate context...**

The culture of *speed* has captured the imagination of modern man to cope with the exigencies of today to make sure that nothing goes out of his hand. The 'fast food', 'instant coffee', 'Xerox copy', 'one-hour photo', 'one day cricket', 'quick fix', the jets and bullet trains, the internet and smart-phones are all inventions of this culture. The culture of 'quick fix' has captured the imagination of those wanting 'on the spot' response to the needs. As an expression of this culture, everything moves; nothing remains stagnant. Thus, the 'man on the move' is the striking symbol of modernity. He is not at rest but constantly moving towards what is new and latest. The culture of speed has also brought along with it the culture of *superficiality* which is often expressed in our relations, responses, approaches and methodologies.

The rapid changes in the world are changing us too rapidly. The Society has not remained untouched by this culture of speed and superficiality. A culture of *doing* where we actively involve ourselves in quick-fix solution activities without really being still and analysing the problem and the

situation is becoming a routine experience. The quick-fix culture of the consumerist world around has gripped us. We tend to believe in “doing” rather than “being”. We hear some of us say that I am with people for so many years yet I do not know them or I find it difficult

what can be called *complacency and compromises*. we tend to maintain the status quo and remain within the well-defined boundaries. We prefer not to launch into the deep or unfamiliar frontiers. There is a cry for thinking out of the box for creative solutions....but thinking

and media have highlighted many of them. The autonomy of premier institutions are at risk; protests in institutions of higher learning are crushed; rational thinkers are eliminated; moral policing has become more frequent; the ‘ban-culture’ is being promoted;



to understand them, indicating felt absence of the depth.

Secondly, we are also experiencing a culture of superficiality. We seem to have developed the art of relating with a superficial “hi” or “hello” attitude. For various reasons we hesitate to share at a deeper level. We rarely meet to discuss things in depth. Substantial issues do not surface during our conversations and deliberations. We refrain from focusing on issues, prioritizing them and formulating a concrete plan of action to follow up. Without an in-depth sharing, we never get to know the fellow Jesuits and the people whom we serve and so they remain strangers, although we may live or work with them for years.

A third aspect of this culture is

out of the box is rare – we tend to carry on the “rut” mentality. We keep saying that we are doing well – satisfied with what we are doing. Hence, the culture of excellence is steadily disappearing. We are reluctant to evaluate ourselves and our works and identify shortcomings that could challenge us. As we are ready to compromise and maintain the status quo, we resist change. There is a steady decline in depth of knowledge, which is necessary for exploring frontiers and excellence in any domain.

#### **Our context**

For quite some time now, the voices from the forces of polarization and intolerance are becoming stronger that are making most Indians uncomfortable. Instances across the country are numerous

voices of dissent are termed ‘anti-national’ and brutally suppressed; the discrimination and violence against the marginalized groups are ignored, minorities are threatened and harassed and being made to feel they do not belong here; and if they wish to stay here they should be subservient to the majority.

Creating out of nothing issues such as ‘love jihad’ and ‘forced conversions’, they try to justify their violence. Exploiting fact and fiction they have made inroads into the minds of people, causing division and hatred. Their agenda is to build a homogenized society based on a foundation of hate and conflict, with “we” and “they” clearly demarcated. Yet, those who indulge in intimidation and intolerance are not challenged and restrained by

those in power, who have promised to protect the Constitution and the people. They are silent and this silence is extremely dangerous.

All these are not acceptable in a democratic society like ours, where freedom of speech and ethos of harmony are far above any narrow domestic wall. The eminent writers and recipients of Sahitya Akademi awards who chose to return their awards have made a collective statement. Through this gesture they have made a political statement that has shaken the conscience of the nation. Former Governor of West Bengal and grandson of Mahatma Gandhi, Gopalkrishna Gandhi, in an exclusive interview with India Today Television, said that “moderating voices of India need to reinforce themselves against those who are up in arms against the spirit of the Indian Constitution.” He further elaborated that “a moderate and liberal person is not a weak person who seeks help; it is the voice of a contrarian.”

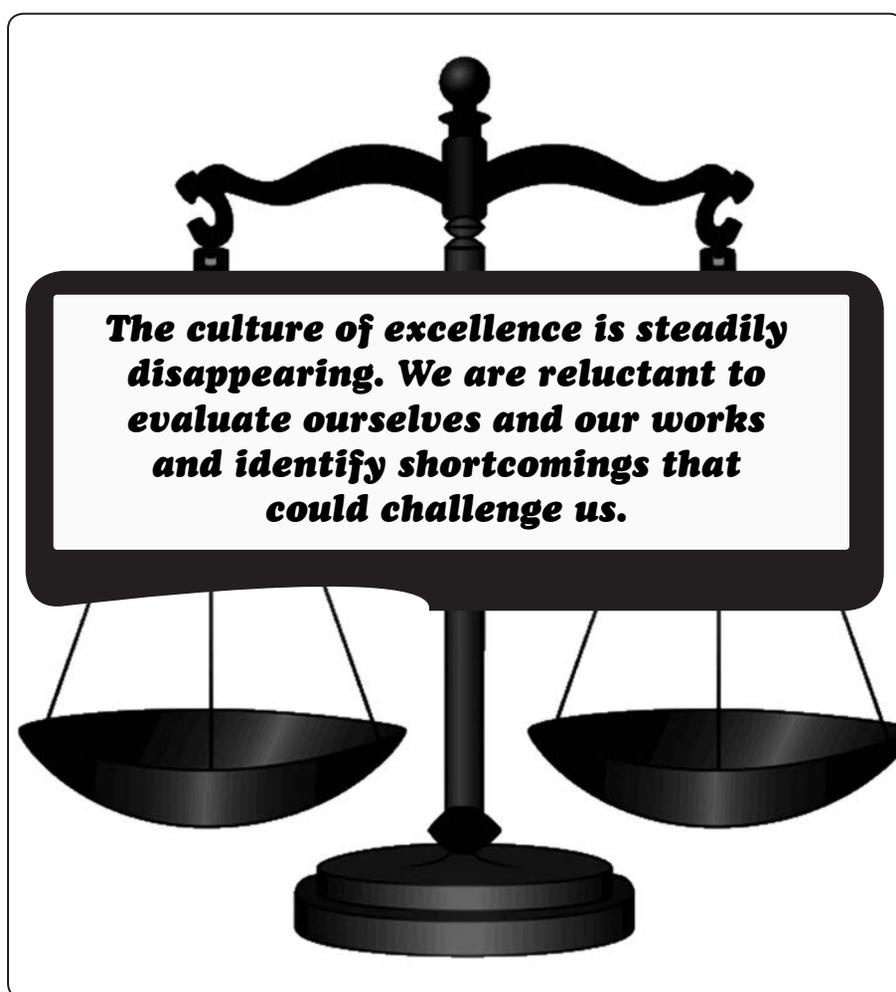
We should be aware that this is the context we live in. It is this context and culture that call us to speak and act fearlessly. If we are to be the sane voice that can stand up to stem the tide and make all the difference, we need depth. But how many of us will be ready to take the risk to become that sane voice? We in the Society have learned to insulate ourselves and protect ourselves from such forces.

Taking a deeper look within, we find ourselves caught up, to a great extent, with a culture of *institutionalization*, which makes us possessive and protective of our institutions and their interests. We are hesitant to become like “the monk who sold his Ferrari”. Priority

is given to maintaining institutional interests as against the needs of the marginalized. Institutions, instead of helping our mission, seem to undermine it. Since we want to protect and preserve our institutions, we do not take a collective stand on important issues of public concern. The prophetic role of a Jesuit is being side-lined; the concern for ‘my comfort’ overrides the ‘comfort for people’.

**The call: hunger for depth**

the world with its challenging features. The ability of effective outlooks is given by the Society. We have a ‘Jesuitness’ which can make it possible to do things. We are supposed to be innovative educators, daring to break and set new boundaries and to run on untrodden paths. We have a heritage that is characterized by being rooted in reality, contemplative in action, committed to work and change. We have a sense of the *magis*. We have



Our socio-economic context may seem ‘negative,’ but it can provide us hope to respond and an opportunity to scratch the surface. It may call us to ignite the fire within. We have inherited the Jesuit charism and culture to encounter

communitarian strength, a sense of cohesion, a collective call and internal life unified with Christ. We also have a clear vision and mission especially for the preferential option for the poor and faith of which justice is an inseparable dimension.

But we need greater synergy among us and within us to make an impact on frontier issues like fundamentalism, ecology, dialogue, and intellectual ministry. Without deepening this Jesuit culture within and among us, responses with a long term impact are difficult to come by. That is where the hunger for depth is a necessary condition. It is a call that we need to listen to individually and collectively, and respond to. As the Chinese wisely say, 'to chop a tree quickly, we should spend twice the

see how the directions have been implemented, evaluate and make a course correction, if necessary? There are enough reasons why the Society should refrain from coming up with new documents, as there are enough promises still remaining unfulfilled in the old documents. We have not absorbed important transformative dimensions of previous decrees. As Michael Amaladoss said in his *Jivan* article (May-June 2015), we already have enough issues described very well in the documents of previous

deep" (Lk 5.4) and provided them an experience of catching a multitude of fishes. It was a call not to get tied to the shore but to let the shorelines go in order to explore the depth. This call probably may lead us to launch out into deep waters of our own life experiences inspired by the previous documents to draw much fruit.

As Fr Adolfo Nicolas, Superior General, writes, "It is our responsibility to 'receive' the decrees and to give them life in our ministries, communities and personal lives. Our experience has taught us that success or failure of a General Congregation does not lie in documents but in the quality of lives which are inspired by them".

Those among us who are exploring frontiers have "a fire that enkindles other fires" (GC 35:2). In order to enkindle other fires we should have the fire in our depth. Thank God for the numerous "inspiring fires" in our midst! "We must draw from this well wherein the promise of resurrection lies," says Gustavo Gutierrez. To face the challenges imposed by our context we need to find resources from the past and the present. It needs courage to capture and document the sane and shrill voices in the midst of us to provide a 'document of inspiration.'

Soon after the GC 35, the South Asia Jesuit Consultation, held at XLRI, Jamshedpur, India, on 24- 27 Oct 2008 came out with the statement, *Towards New Frontiers Together*. After five years it is worthwhile to look back at the document. The major directives provided in the statement could become the source of our search under the four depth domains suggested by Fr General.



**Violence against the marginalized groups are ignored, minorities are threatened and harassed and being made to feel they do not belong here.**

time sharpening our axe'.

Today, the Society that is trying to listen to and discerning important calls is led to ask: do we need another document from GC 36 or should we rather look back on the last 40 years (GC 32 onwards),

Congregations that need refocusing now.

We need to recall an important call of Jesus to his 'depressed' disciples who were disappointed with their efforts for a catch. He called them to "launch out into the

The exercise could be an attempt to increase our hunger for depth.

#### **Affective depth**

- Can we document our efforts in promoting an open dialogue

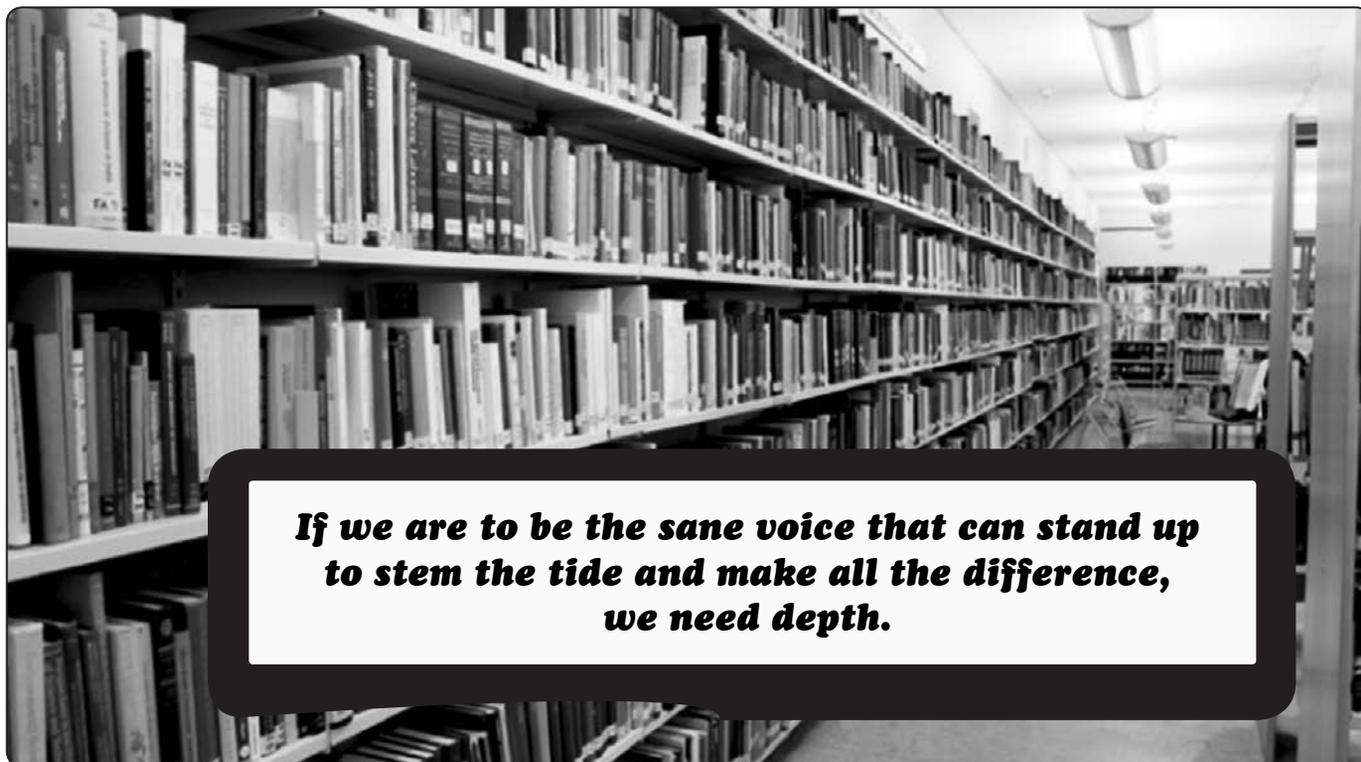
or her rightful space in society?

#### **Intellectual depth**

- Can we document our efforts in providing ourselves and to others a serious intellectual dimension and

ecologically healthy technical and social alternatives?

- Can we document our efforts in the formation of basic human communities reaching out to all



***If we are to be the sane voice that can stand up to stem the tide and make all the difference, we need depth.***

in communities through regular feedback and assistance, through discernment, readiness to do more than the assigned tasks and making one's time, talents and resources available for the mission of the community and hospitality?

- Can we document our efforts in identifying and rooting out divisive forces in our communities, such as caste, ethnicity, regionalism, individualism and practices that maintain such divisions?

- Can we document our efforts over the years where we have addressed the core issues of our people collectively and systematically; creating structures to help the marginalized break the "Culture of Silence" and by evolving a common ethos that the deprived occupies his

analysis of the fundamentalist forces through research and publications on aspects related to fundamentalism, human rights, ecology, dialogue, and reconciliation with a special emphasis on features of secularism specific to South Asia?

- Can we document our efforts in countering the propaganda unleashed by forces that want to foment hatred and conflict through our media campaigns, television, print media and other propaganda machinery?

#### **Effective depth**

- Can we document our efforts of positive interventions in stopping the projects/activities that result in environmental degradation and negative impacts on the lives of the poor, and our efforts in searching for

ethnic, religious, linguistic and other groups and to form active cells/task forces to deal with human rights abuses and violence caused by divisive forces?

#### **Collaborative depth**

- Can we document our efforts in the inter-religious dialogue ministry bringing about dialogue of cultures and religions, dialogue of life, dialogue of action and dialogue of ideas?

- Can we document our efforts in collaboration, cooperation and coordination among and between different sections of Indian society by promoting justice, common interests and development of all?

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## Reorienting formation in the context of restructuring in the Assistancy

BY RAJ IRUDAYA, SJ

Formation in the Society of Jesus today is confronted by a context marked by profound changes, acute conflicts, complexities and new possibilities. As Pope Benedict XVI has reminded us, we are living in a period of great social, economic and political changes; sharp ethical, cultural and environmental problems, conflicts of all kinds, but also of more intense communication among peoples, of new possibilities of acquaintance and dialogue, of a deep longing for peace (*Allocution to the 35<sup>th</sup> General Congregation of the Society of Jesus*, 21 Feb 2008, no.2). Pope Francis has called 'rapidification' the acceleration of changes affecting humanity and the planet. "The social dimensions of global change include the effects of technological innovations on employment, social exclusion, an inequitable distribution and consumption of energy and other services, social breakdown, increased violence and a rise in new forms of social aggression, growing drug use by young people, and the loss of identity. Some of these signs are also symptomatic of real social decline, the silent rupture of the bonds of integration and social cohesion" (*Laudato Si*, no.18).

GC 35 paints a graphic picture of the growing tensions and paradoxes precipitated by a new world of instant communication, digital technology and of worldwide markets (D.3, no.11). The context of the world today has immense impact on the mission

as well on formation. We are called to a new context and challenged by new frontiers and horizons. Our men need to be prepared in formation to face this global world marked by profound changes and struggles and to work ceaselessly for the growth of the Reign of God. Formation needs to be geared towards deepening our understanding of the call to serve faith, to promote justice, and to dialogue with culture and other religions in the light of the apostolic mandate to establish right relationships with God, with one another, and with creation (GC 35, D.3, no.12).

### Formation in the Assistancy: An Evolving Paradigm

Jesuit formation has been going through a radical shift since GC 32. Vatican II gave a paradigm shift to priestly formation, which envisaged a move from the monastic model of formation to the mission-oriented formation.

The inspiration on inculturation in formation was derived from GC 32 which offered a sharpened focus of mission, 'the service of faith and the promotion of justice'. Capturing the goal of Jesuit formation then, the Inculturation Commission stated: "The product of Jesuit formation in India today should be an apostle who, as a man with 'true freedom and maturity of spirit' (GC 31, D.8/7), has grasped his peculiar religious (and priestly) apostolic vocation in a personal integrated manner, who is 'inserted' into the language, realities and general culture of the region where he will live and work, and who remains open in temper and spirit to the wider values and realities of the nation as a whole, of the universal

Society and the Church, indeed of the world at large" (*Jesuit Formation and Inculturation in India Today*, p.33).

The four important components of Jesuit formation as presented by the Inculturation Commission are: Vernacularization, Regionalization, Contextualization and Integration or Harmonization. The different formation stages, especially the early ones like Novitiate and Juniorate, and the later ones especially Philosophy and Theology entered into different experiments incorporating the spirit of inculturation. Context played an important role in formation and several socio-pastoral exposure programmes were introduced in the different stages of formation. To cap it all, the Regional Theology Centre gave concrete expression to the call of inculturation from 1978 onwards.

The Jesuit Conference of South Asia (JCSA) came out with a trend-setting Statement on Formation for Mission in October 1989 known as 'The Kathmandu Statement'. The Statement was seen as South-Asianizing of GCs 32 & 33. It highlighted certain important aspects of our mission, i.e. contextualized mission, building human communities, commitment to structural change and prophetic witness in action. This called for the need for review and reorientation of Formation. Our mission calls for men of a pioneering spirit, men ready to take risks for the sake of the kingdom, men who can make our institutions innovative and responsive to changing situations, men who exemplify the prophetic dimension so evident in the early Society, universal in outlook, yet rooted in their culture, committed

to serious study and striving for the *Magis*, conscious of the need for continuing formation.

In order to make formation structures and practices truly effective in forming such men, a Formation Review Commission (FRC) in 1990 presented two key concepts *Method and Content* as central to the Assistancy's vision of formation. The FRC delineated some principles of Experience-based Pedagogy like formation in mission, experience-based teaching, close accompaniment of the formees and responsibility of

we live in a transnational world with a growing consciousness of the interdependence of all people, serving Christ's mission today means paying special attention to its global context. This requires us to act as a universal body with a universal mission, realizing at the same time the radical diversity of our situations (GC 35, D.2, no.20). Availability to this universal mission has to be inculcated in formation, from the novitiate onwards. That we join the Society and not a province, needs to be reiterated.

dwindling. Along with living the biblical faith, the formees should be helped to become profoundly familiar with the Jesuit sources of spirituality at all stages of formation and to live the spirit and charism of the Society.

**d) Intellectual Depth:** Jesuits are called upon to do 'learned ministry'. The long tradition of the involvement of the Society in the intellectual apostolate forms part of our religious identity. The challenging context of today confronts us with multiple problems, struggles and issues which require



the formees in their own formation.

With a view towards better serving our universal mission, Fr General on the recommendation of GC 35 initiated in 2011 a process of renewal of Provinces and Province structures for greater apostolic effectiveness in today's context. The South Asian Assistancy has initiated the process of restructuring. In the context of restructuring, reorientation of formation is also one important component.

In order to reorient the formation which will help the formees to face a new context challenged by new frontiers, the following perspectives need to be gradually incorporated and deepened into the different stages of formation.

**a) Universal Mission:** As

**b) Integral Formation:** The aim of formation is a personal integration of all the various dimensions that go into the making of a Jesuit. The personal, psychological, spiritual, communitarian, academic and apostolic aspects of the formees need to be integrated in order to help them become integrated Jesuits. This will help them see their human person as a connected being and help them grow as holistic individuals.

**c) Spiritual Depth:** Fr Adolfo Nicolas refers to the 'globalization of superficiality' as one of the negative impacts of globalization, which affects profoundly thousands of youth entrusted to us. Superficiality has crept into our spiritual life and so the 'men of virtue' in the Society, as envisaged by St. Ignatius, are

openness to intellectual reflection. The globalization of superficiality has started corroding the intellectual tradition of the formees and they need to be helped from the beginning of formation to enter the intellectual dimension which is part of all our ministries. To inculcate spiritual and intellectual depth in our formees, the four dimensions of formation, i.e. Context, Content, Competency and Charism must be integrated into all the stages of formation (Adolfo Nicolas, "Intellectual Formation of our Men during their course of Studies," 3 March, 2014).

**e) Formation in and for Mission:** As formation needs to take place in the context of mission, the FRC proposed a number of creative strategies and contextual

programmes for our formation. This was meant to enable the formees to acquire experience-based knowledge, coupled with rigorous reflection on praxis and perceptive spiritual discernment. With a study on the gains and limitations of this formation in mission, renewed efforts and programmes must be introduced or strengthened to prepare our men in and for mission.

**f) Competency and Creativity:** Ministerial competency is the third dimension of formation according to Fr Adolfo Nicolas. Our formation should also help our formees to become creative and innovative in their future ministries. Training in ministerial competencies in the different stages of formation needs to be imparted. We need to place our men in situations which will trigger their creativity and capacity for innovation.

**g) Collaboration:** GC 35 has renewed our commitment to apostolic collaboration (GC 35, D.6, no.2). The mission cannot be efficaciously carried out without collaboration with the laity, people of other faiths and cultures, men and women of good will. It is strongly recommended that from the earliest stages of Jesuit formation and throughout our lives as Jesuits, training in collaboration must be experiential. Formees need to develop maturity, interior freedom, teamwork skills, interpersonal and public relations skills to become effective collaborators in mission.

**h) Ecology:** Pope Francis' encyclical, *Laudato Si - Care for Our Common Home*, is a timely and much-needed call and response to the escalating ecological crisis. The call of GC 35 to reconciliation with creation invites Jesuits and those who share our mission to show ever more effective ecological solidarity in our spiritual, communal and apostolic lives. The ecological concerns of the Church and the Society should enter

into our formation so as to prepare men who are eco-sensitive and eco-active.

**h) Gender Sensitivity:** Our solidarity with women as collaborators in the mission of the Reign of God is considered integral to our mission (GC 34, D.14, no.16). It also has a universal dimension in that it involves men and women everywhere, cutting across barriers of class and culture. Our formees need to be sensitized regarding gender justice and equality so that they cultivate a healthy, mature and dignified interaction with women in mission.

**i) Our Way of Proceeding:** The characteristics of our way of proceeding were born in the life of St Ignatius and shared by his first companions. Certain attitudes, values and patterns of behaviour form the Jesuit way of proceeding. Formees need to be helped to follow the Jesuit way of proceeding as expressed in experiencing deep personal love for Jesus Christ, becoming contemplative in action, solidarity with those most in need, partnership with others, in being men of learned ministry, men sent, always available for new Missions, ever searching spirit for the *Magis* (GC 34, D.26, nos.1-29).

#### **Responding to the *Kairos* Moment Today**

As we have spanned through the formation scenario in the South Asian Assistancy, we can underscore one important characteristic of Jesuit formation as one of ongoing and not static and stagnated. It keeps on making serious and sincere attempts to make formation incorporate the signs of the times and respond to the needs of the mission at large.

In the light and guidance of GC documents, Inculturation Commission Review, JCSA's Kathmandu Statement, Formation Review Commission, Letters of Frs General, several changes in the structures and programmes

of formation have been ushered in to revamp our formation more personalized and contextualized. Moreover we cannot lose sight of the blocks and hurdles we encounter in the formation scenario, i.e. superficiality, mediocrity, lack of spiritual and intellectual depth, improper use and undue dependence on the electronic media, decreasing familiarity with the Ignatian spirituality and sources, lack of continual follow-up and accompaniment of the formees from one stage to another, lack of well-trained formators in pre-novitiate and Juniorate specially, inadequate number of well-trained spiritual directors etc. There are attempts made to address the above-mentioned issues and concerns.

More needed and appropriate changes will be brought to formation in the context of the restructuring of the provinces and Assistancy. We look forward to the guidance and directions GC 36 will offer us. The Phesama Statement of JCSA issued in 2014 invites us to recognize and respond to the *Kairos* moment today: "We recognize the *kairos* in the Church, in the style and ministry of Pope Francis, in the paschal joy experienced by our companions at the bicentenary celebrations of the Restoration of the Society and in the imminent convocation of GC 36".

Revisiting our formation programme in order to instil in our men a greater passion for Christ and His mission, and to become learned, and skilled in ministries, imbued with the spirit of eco-consciousness, gender-sensitivity, collaboration and dialogue will be the next step in our on-going formation. The formation in the Assistancy continues to be personalized, integrated, accompanied and transformative with spiritual, social and intellectual depth inspired by the spirit of *Magis* for the Greater Glory of God. ■

*Fr Raj Irudaya, SJ (MDU) is the Assistancy Delegate for Formation (ADF).*

BY JAMES B. DABHI, SJ

I was about to begin my class, but the Seminary dog began barking. I requested the beadle to go and make that dog quiet. He approached the caged dog and sternly ordered him to shut up. We heard what he said in total silence. On returning to the classroom, he looked at me and said, "Jimmy, the dog has stopped barking; now, you start."

Everyone laughed but I was reminded of what Michael Gorman said in his book on St Paul. Trying to explain Paul's unabated zeal to proclaim Christ, Gorman offers the analogy of a dog. "Dogs bark by virtue of being dogs; they do not need to be instructed to do so. Sometimes they bark on their own, sometimes when prompted or disturbed, sometimes hesitatingly, and sometimes aggressively. But bark they do." (Michael J. Gorman, *Becoming the Gospel: Paul, Participation, and Mission* (2015, p. 45.)

Do I proclaim Christ by virtue of being what I am - someone sent on a mission to preach the Gospel? This is what Pope Francis points out in his Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*. (The Joy of the Gospel).

**My encounter with Jesus:** Pope Francis writes that being a Christian is not the result of an ethical choice, but of the encounter with a person which gives life a decisive direction. Having been born in a Catholic family, Christianity is the gift given to me by my parents. However, it was I who decided to become a Jesuit, on account of my personal encounter with Jesus. After obtaining a degree in Dairy Technology and securing well-remunerated post of Technical Officer at Amul Dairy, I would not have entered the Novitiate directly, had I not had a personal encounter with Jesus. I continued encountering Jesus since then till date, especially in dissolving my ego, self-centeredness, and ill-founded ambitions.

The consecrated life that I have opted for offers the means to deepen my encounter with Jesus. Those means include daily prayer, twice a day examination of conscience, regular spiritual direction, yearly manifestation of conscience, annual retreat, occasional feedback from students, daily Eucharist, and frequenting of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. What I cherish the most is the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

**My mission:** As the adage goes, "I cannot do all, but all can do it." Being called to consecrated life, all of

MICHAEL J. GORMAN

## Becoming the Gospel

Paul, Participation, and Mission



## The Joy of my mission

us are sent on a mission to propagate and advance the Kingdom of God. In that Kingdom of God, the role assigned to me is to teach Sacred Scriptures in a Seminary. Pope Francis carefronts me with a challenge: We need to remember that all religious teaching ultimately has to be reflected in the teacher's life (see EG/42). I perennially realize, while teaching the Word of God, like Prophet Ezekiel, I too must *eat the scroll*. I am aware that students learn more from what I am outside the classroom than from my 45 minute lecture. My first mission is to reduce the gulf between

my preaching and practicing. My mission mandates not merely self-knowledge, but also sufficient knowledge of my community. Pope Francis holds that evangelizers take on the smell of the sheep and the sheep are willing to hear their voice (see EG/24). The mission of formation of future priests entrusted to me requires that I accompany them and befriend them. I make sincere efforts, yet I am in the process of learning how to strike a balance between charity and firmness. I strenuously struggle to become at least a measuring rod in a few areas of the student's life.

**Reality out there:** The Catholic Church came to Gujarat in 1893 and has grown over the years. In the Seminary, steps are being taken to make it more and more regional through weekend ministries in diverse fields, exposure programs, insisting on learning the language of the region, and offering some context-based courses. Though I am a son of the soil, I dare not claim to know all the local languages, all the social customs and all the festivals that are celebrated here. The reality out there spurs me on to become genuinely a son of the soil.

The Pope invites everyone to be bold and creative in rethinking the goals, structures, style, and methods of evangelization. But he counsels that we should not walk alone, but rely on our brothers and sisters. Each of these three angles - my personal encounter with Jesus, my mission and reality out there - impels me to move to another angle and my mission fills me with joy. ■

*Fr James B. Dabhi (G.U.J) is the Dean of Gujarat Vidya Deep Regional Seminary. This is a summary of what he shared at a province gathering in November last year.*

## Scholars discuss impact of modernity at IDCR

About twenty scholars and religious leaders from South, Southeast, and East Asia, as well as from France and the United States of America, met from 15 to 18 Feb 2016 at the Institute of Dialogue with Cultures and Religions (IDCR) at Loyola College, Chennai to study the impact of modernity on society and religions in Asia, as compared to the West, and to explore what roles religious groups play, as public religions, in protecting religious freedom and promoting peace with justice. Seminar papers, responses and discussions explored the situations in China, Malaysia, Indonesia, India, Sri Lanka,



France, the Philippines, and the United States of America. Many participants noted the impact of the history of colonialism on the present situation, the need for national identity, and the ambiguous role of religions in this process. The participants used a variety of inter-disciplinary methodologies, ranging from history to sociology to political science to demographics to theology. Michael Amaladoss, SJ, Director, IDCR, emphasized that "Asian religions are not institutional like Christianity and they have not had the same kind of relationship to politics, partly because of its colonial situation in recent centuries." The seminar participants discussed the development of the distinct but related processes of secularism and secularization, aware that these terms can mean different things in different settings. Clarence Devadass pointed out that in Malaysia, instead of secularization, "there seems to be 'sacralisation' of secular institutions. This 'phenomenon' is the impact of the Islamisation that is taking place in Malaysia. . . . The sacralisation of power has brought about discriminatory policies on those who do not profess the religion of Islam." Regarding nearby Indonesia, Heru Prakosa, S.J., stressed the complexity of the situation: "On the one hand, some Muslims and Christians can fight one another, but on the other hand, many of them can also make efforts by collecting humanitarian aid for both sides. The relationship is connected with religious and political interests."

Rudolf Heredia, SJ, explored secularism and secularization in India in relation to the constitutional challenges regarding religious tolerance. Acknowledging that "secularization can precipitate religious intolerance and oppression," he also stressed that "it also has a liberating potential where this change is oriented by an ideology committed to freedom and tolerance, a necessary condition for a functioning liberal democracy in a multi-cultural, pluri-religious society." Coming from Sri Lanka, Buddhist Professor Asanga Tilakaratne noted that historically justice and human rights were not major Buddhist concerns. Instead, Buddhists focused on the virtues of "compassion, friendliness, sympathetic joy, forbearance, and the like."

The participants acknowledged the tentativeness of their conclusions because of the important differences among such diverse contexts. Conflicts involving national and religious identities in diverse settings call for careful scholarship and informed leadership to promote respect for the full equality of all humans. The participants believe there is a need for further historical, social, and political research on developments that have shaped the present situations. Often there are tensions between majority and minority groups, with preferential treatment of favored communities at the expense of others. The participants believe their nations need to realize their identities as multi-religious and multi-cultural without discrimination against the human rights of any group for any reasons. In light of the discussions of various conflicts, they call for respect for the equality and dignity of all humans. They urge further development of the dialogue of life, in which interreligious partners come together seeking relationships of trust as good neighbors. They also see a need for more articulate expressions of the experiences of lived dialogue. They believe and hope that the focus of the dialogue of life can lead to a consensus on basic shared human and spiritual values on which people can construct a community of peoples.

Participants note a further need to develop the dialogue of action by promoting the positive, liberative aspects of diverse religions and cultures. They affirmed the need for intra-religious dialogue to complement interreligious discussions. At the conclusion, all the participants expressed their heartiest gratitude to Michael Amaladoss, SJ, and Vincent Sekhar, SJ for their initiative and creativity in convening this seminar; and they hope that these discussions will be the beginning of ongoing research and conversation.

- Leo D. Lefebure, SJ

## Vasundhara invites Jesuits to partner with Rajasthan government

Rajasthan Chief Minister, Vasundhara Raje invited the Jesuit priests, who run St. Xavier's School in state capital Jaipur to partner the government in skill development initiatives undertaken by the Rajasthan State Livelihood Development Corporation (RSLDC). The BJP chief minister said she was pleased to see that the Jesuit priests had a vocational training school and that it was making a difference to the lives of students from all sections of society. She was speaking at the 75th anniversary celebrations of the school, which was also attended by Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Salvatore Pennacchio, the papal representative in India and Nepal. She lauded the St. Xavier's management for setting up a balwadi that admitted 30 students each year, helping children from poor families complete their education at the school. The Chief Minister had special words of praise for the school band, which put up a performance as part of the celebrations of the 75th anniversary of the school. There were many young schoolgirls playing the drums in the band, and Raje said she was pleased to see girls marching as part of the band. She called upon students to be sensitive to others and open to diverse points of view. State BJP president Ashok Parnami also attended the platinum jubilee celebrations of the school.

Source: UCAN

# Easter morning after the storm

*The story of the woman who saw him die and rise*

BY DR RALPH F. WILSON

**I**t was like a violent storm had gone through leaving destruction in its wake. But early this Sunday morning all is quiet — the lull after the storm — or so it seems to Mary. But I'm getting ahead of myself. Let me tell you the story.

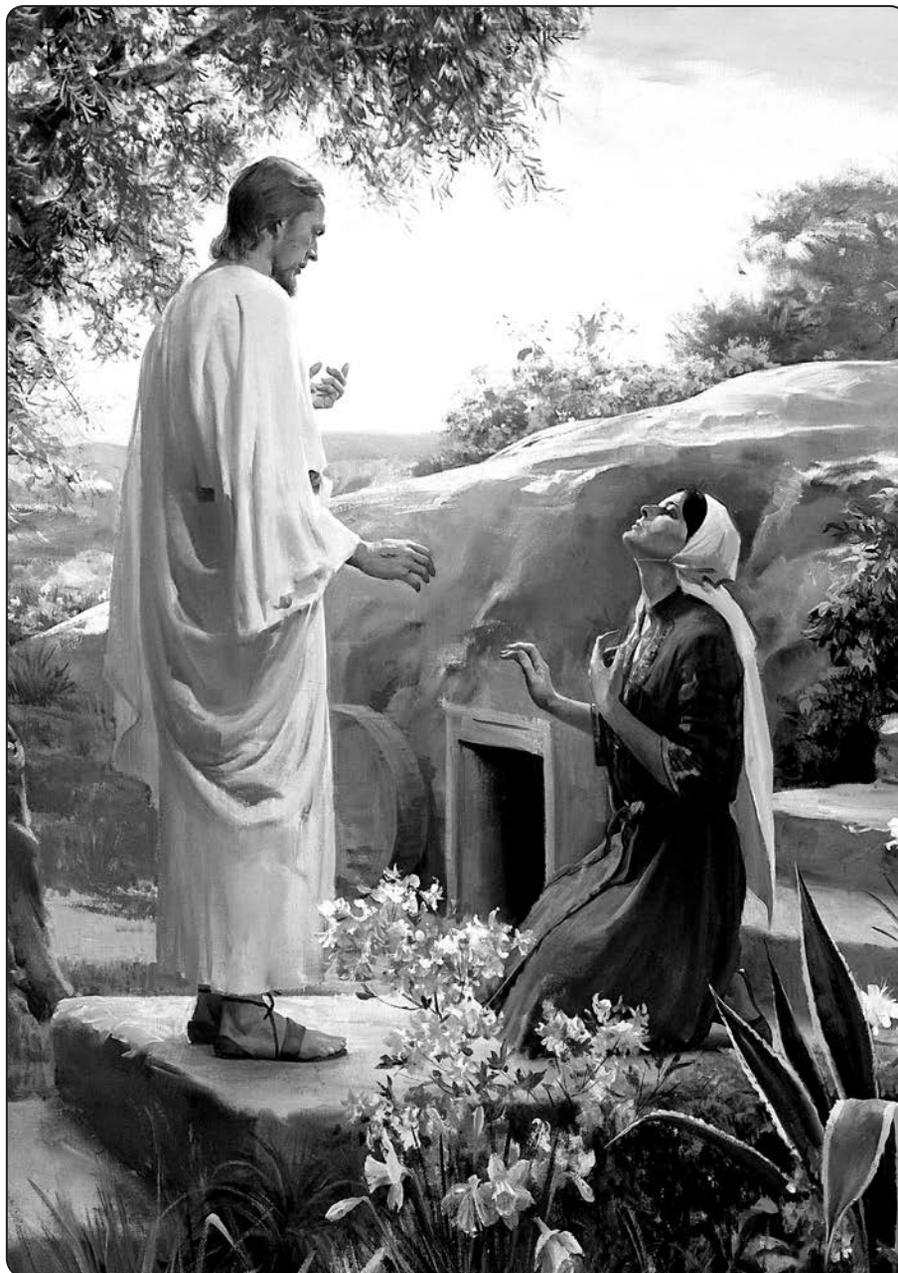
First, there is Jesus, the leader and prophet from Galilee. When his popularity was at its apex in Jerusalem just the week before, many had considered him the Messiah. But on Friday, his enemies had succeeded in executing him by crucifixion.

There are soldiers guarding his tomb. Why? His enemies had heard a report that Jesus was supposed to "rise again" on the third day. Preposterous, his enemies said, but they could take no chances. If there were a guard - especially a Roman guard - his disciples wouldn't dare steal the body and claim he'd been raised. Keep a lid on any stories that might re-enflame the populace - that was the plan.

In the moist, bone-chilling darkness, the soldiers huddle around a sputtering fire that flickers ghostly images amidst the shadows of tombs. They're not afraid, mind you, just ill at ease, anxious for the dawn that will soon brighten the horizon.

Jesus' disciples figure in the story, too, but they *are* afraid — terrified that they too will be arrested because of their close association with Jesus. They're in hiding within the city. "No worries from them now," their enemies smirk.

Crowds of pilgrims that had swelled Jerusalem to the bursting point over the Passover weekend have gone home now, back to their villages, bearing a disquieting story of how the



Galilean healer had been killed. They are still angry, of course, but the danger of riot over the Nazarene's trial and execution is past.

That's how things stood just before dawn. Sad, tragic. So much hope, so much promise. But now it

had come to nothing. A movement so full exuberance had been crushed - its famous leader cut down, its lieutenants in hiding, its followers scattered.

But after the storm, life must go on. It is here we meet Mary Magdalene. She has been one of the Nazarene's most

devoted followers. She and some of the women have risen very early to honor the teacher's body and are headed for the garden tomb just outside the city walls. Within the sepulcher he lies, cold and lifeless on a rock slab. Mary Magdalene had been there Friday night. Her own hands had helped wash and prepare the body.

The women turn from the lane into the cemetery garden, walking numbly, one foot in front of the other. Suddenly Mary looks up and shouts: "The stone has been moved!"

She runs into the garden, past remnants of a smoky fire, soldiers' equipment in disarray, abandoned in haste. She sprints to the now-open tomb. The ribbon and Roman seal that have guaranteed its security hang limply in the morning air.

"Where is he?" she shrieks, and ducks inside.

The darkness of the tomb and the concrete-like odor of fresh-cut limestone at the back of her mouth overwhelm her for a moment. As her eyes adjust, there on a shelf chiseled from the wall of the cave, she can make out grave clothes, neatly folded. But where is Jesus? Grave-robbers!

Out in a flash, she begins to run back into the city.

"I'll tell Peter and John," she calls as she speeds on. In a few moments, the disciple-women will see an angel who tells them, "He is risen!" But by now, Mary is back in Jerusalem. She pauses for a moment at the head of the street where the disciples are staying. Hands on her legs, heaving, trying to catch her breath. Now she pounds on the door.

"Peter, Peter!"

After a long pause, the disciple who, until recently, everyone acknowledged as the leader, opens the door a crack, looks up the street, then down it. Finally, he motions Mary inside and quickly shuts the door.

"Somebody has taken his body out of the tomb! We can't find him!"

Now Peter and John are in panic mode. They pull on tunics and sandals and dash towards the cemetery. Mary follows. Slowly now, head down, she

walks and weeps. By the time she arrives back at the tomb, Peter and John have come and gone. The women are nowhere to be seen.

She pauses by the door for a long moment, weeping uncontrollably. Then she gathers herself and steps into the cold chamber. The sun is rising now, casting long shadows across the garden. But this time, the tomb seems lit, also. Two men in bright white, dressed in long robes that extend down to their feet, rise as she enters.

"Why are you crying?"

She sobs out her story. "They have taken my Lord away, and I don't know

***That day in the garden  
as she knelt before  
him, she had touched  
his pierced feet - no  
longer cold in her  
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had washed them. Now  
they were warm, alive.***

where they have put him." She dissolves into tears.

When she looks up the men are gone. She turns. There, the sun silhouetting him in the doorway, is yet another man — the gardener, she supposes. Perhaps he'll know.

"Why are you crying?" he asks quietly. "Who are you looking for?"

She begins her sad tale for a third time, of grave robbers who have desecrated the tomb and of the teacher who had healed her and restored her very life to wholeness. "If you have taken him," she pleads, "tell me where his body is and I'll see that it is retrieved. There'll be no trouble."

"Mary!" The voice so familiar.

She looks up in sudden recognition. "Rabbi!" she cries and falls at his feet.

It is Jesus. It is the Lord. He is not dead. He is risen from the grave. He is alive. He is resurrected as he had said.

The storm has passed and the sun has broken through the clouds into a new day.

What does it mean? What did it mean to Mary?

First, her discredited Lord no longer lay in shame. He had been authenticated by God himself who had raised him from the dead. With his lifeless body in the tomb, confusing doubts had come. But now, everything he had taught took on new meaning. She actually *was* forgiven by God. He *would* return. It was all true. True indeed!

Jesus stayed with them on and off for more than a month. Then one day he ascended into heaven. But his Spirit lingered and spread.

Over the next few years, Mary would watch the Christian movement grow in spurts, from 100 to 3,000 in a single day. Then to 5,000 men — more than a fifth of the Jerusalem's entire population. Persecution came, but instead of snuffing out this story of the resurrection of the Son of God, persecution caused it to spread all the more. The movement raced like wildfire to the farthest reaches of the world. He is alive! Jesus is alive. Untold millions call him Lord.

Now old, facing her own impending death, Mary realizes one more thing that the resurrection means to her. That day in the garden as she knelt before him, she had touched his pierced feet - no longer cold in her hands as they had been that terrible Friday night when she had washed them. Now they were warm, alive.

Yes, death will come soon, but she no longer fears it. For she has touched the One who has conquered death. And in her final minutes she smiles and says - just loud enough for those close by to hear - "Death, where is your terror? He is risen from the dead!" Her eyes close for the last time.

The sun is shining very brightly indeed. ■

Courtesy: <http://www.joyfulheart.com>

# Go back to Galilee!

BY RON ROLHEISER, OMI

Something there is that needs a crucifixion. Everything that's good eventually gets scapegoated and crucified. How? By that curious, perverse dictate somehow innate within human life that assures that there's always someone or something that cannot leave well enough alone, but, for reasons of its own, must hunt down and lash out at what's good. What's good, what's of God, will always at some point be misunderstood, envied, hated, pursued, falsely accused, and eventually nailed to some cross. Every body of Christ inevitably suffers the same fate as Jesus: death through misunderstanding, ignorance, and jealousy.

But there's a flipside as well: Resurrection always eventually triumphs crucifixion. What's good eventually triumphs. Thus, while nothing that's of God will avoid crucifixion, no body of Christ stays in the tomb for long. God always rolls back the stone and, soon enough, new life bursts forth and we see why that original life had to be crucified. ("Wasn't it necessary that the Christ should so have to suffer and die?") Resurrection invariably follows crucifixion. Every crucified body will rise again. Our hope takes its root in that.

But how does this happen? Where do we see the resurrection? How do we experience resurrection after a crucifixion?

Scripture is subtle, though clear, on this. Where can we expect to experience resurrection? The gospel tell us that, on the morning of the resurrection, the women-followers of Jesus set out for the tomb of Jesus, carrying spices, expecting to anoint and

embalm a dead body. What they find is not a dead body, but an empty tomb and an angel challenging them with these words: "Why are you looking for the living among the dead? Go instead into Galilee and you will find him there!"

Go instead into Galilee. Why Galilee? What's Galilee? And how do we get there?

In the gospels, Galilee is not simply a geographical location, a place on a map. It is first of all a place in the heart. As well, Galilee refers to the dream and to the road of discipleship that the disciples once walked with Jesus and to that place and time when their hearts most burned with hope and enthusiasm. And now, after the crucifixion, just when they feel that the dream is dead, that their faith is only fantasy, they are told to go back to the place where it all began: "Go back to Galilee. He will meet you there!"

And they do go back to Galilee, both to the geographical location and to that special place in their hearts where once burned the dream of discipleship. And just as promised, Jesus appears to them. He doesn't appear exactly as he was before, or as frequently as they would like him to, but he does appear as more than a ghost and a memory. The Christ that appears to them after the resurrection is in a different modality, but he's physical enough to eat fish in their presence, real enough to be touched as a human being, and powerful enough to change their lives forever. Ultimately that's what the resurrection asks us to do: To go back to Galilee, to return to the dream, hope, and discipleship that had once inflamed us but has now been lost through disillusionment.

This parallels what happens on the road to Emmaus in Luke's gospel, where we are told that on the day of the resurrection, two disciples were walking

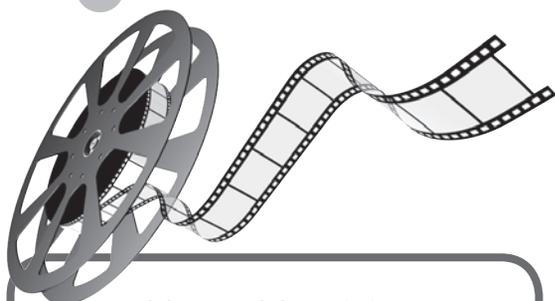


away from Jerusalem towards Emmaus, with their faces downcast. An entire spirituality could be unpacked from that simple line: For Luke, Jerusalem means the dream, the hope, and the religious centre from which all is to begin and where ultimately, all is to culminate. And the disciples are "walking away" from this place, away from their dream, towards Emmaus (Emmaus was a Roman Spa, a Las Vegas, or Monte Carlo). Since their dream has been crucified, the disciples are understandably discouraged and are walking away from it, towards some human solace, despairing in their hope. Jesus appears to them on the road, reshapes their hope and turns them back towards Jerusalem.

That is one of the essential messages of Easter: Whenever we are discouraged in our faith, whenever our hopes seem to be crucified, we need to go back to Galilee and Jerusalem, that is, back to the dream and the road of discipleship that we had embarked upon before things went wrong. The temptation, of course, whenever the kingdom doesn't seem to work, is to abandon discipleship for human consolation, to head off instead for Emmaus, for the consolation of Las Vegas or Monte Carlo.

But, as we know, we never quite get to Las Vegas or Monte Carlo. In one guise or another, Christ always meets us on the road to those places, burns holes in our hearts, explains our latest crucifixion to us, and sends us back – and to our abandoned discipleship. Once there, it all makes sense again. ■

*Courtesy: www.ronrolheiser.com*

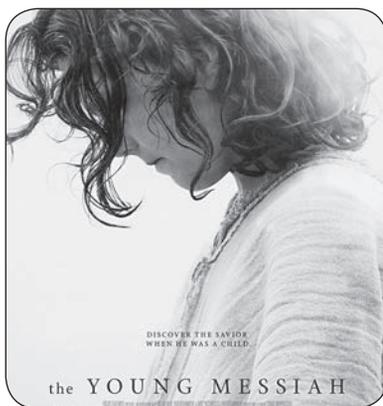


## Young Messiah

*The Young Messiah*

A film by Cyrus Nowrasteh

Starring Adam Greaves-Neal, Sean Bean, David Bradley...



It was with that cynical view that I viewed "The Young Messiah." I watched it once. I watched it again. Then I watched it a third time with my family. Now I can't wait to see it on the big screen.

The movie is directed by Cyrus Nowrasteh, co-written with his wife, Betsy Giffen Nowrasteh, the team responsible for another great feature film – *The Stoning of Soriah M.*

The film is a fictional interpretation of what it must have been like for the 7-year-old Jesus to learn His destiny. It starts in Egypt, where Jesus spent His early years. We often forget about that time because the Bible offers little in the way of detail about it. Later, we follow Jesus, Mary and Joseph as they travel back to their home in Nazareth.

I'm not issuing any spoiler alerts. I'm not going to tell you much about the movie's twists and turns. I'm just going to tell you it is faithful to the time period, it is gorgeously filmed, it is extraordinarily well acted, and the story is utterly amazing, endearing and inspiring.

Though the story is obviously extra-biblical, its spirit is in harmony with the message of the Scriptures. **- Joseph Farah**

## Not for rituals and food, but for the school



Avinash Nakat honoured the memory of his wife in a heart touching way – by digitalizing a zilla parishad school with the money that was earmarked for the rituals after her death.

A 35-year old housewife, Rupali's world was her family – her husband and daughters, 9-year-old Samruddhi and 5-year-old Anandi. Avinash Nakat is a well-known face in Akola as he works for the rights of farmers through his NGO, Yuvarashtra. Rupali too took interest in Avinash's social work. The family looked absolutely perfect. But on 03 Feb '16, Rupali's nose started bleeding. She was taken to the hospital in Akola where she was diagnosed with acute leukaemia. Next day, Avinash took her to Nagpur to get her better treatment as there are no haematologist in Akola. But the cancer had damaged her brain cells, resulting in a haemorrhage. She died on the night of 05 Feb '16. After the cremation, Avinash announced that he would not spend on the rituals but would digitalize the zilla parishad school in his village with the money. While some villagers opposed his idea, Rupali's family supported him. A projector was installed for Rs. 26,000, a computer for Rs. 18,000, a white board was brought for Rs. 5,000, etc. Avinash spent what others would spend on rituals and dinner to digitalize a school.

Courtesy: [www.thebetterindia.com](http://www.thebetterindia.com)

## Art of tidying up

Marie Kondo's unique KonMari Method of tidying up is nothing short of life-changing—and her first book, *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up*, has become a worldwide sensation. In *Spark Joy*, Kondo presents an in-depth, illustrated manual on how to declutter and organize specific items throughout the house, from kitchen and bathroom items to work-related papers and hobby collections. User-friendly line drawings illustrate Kondo's patented folding method and her properly organized drawers, closets, and cabinets. This book is perfect for anyone who wants a home - and a life that sparks joy.



**Spark Joy:**  
*An Illustrated Master Class on the Art of Organizing and Tidying Up*

By Marie Kondo

Published by Ten Speed Press

Pages: 292; Price: Rs.800

A radical transformation has taken place in village Mahaudi Barkagaon, Hazaribag Dt. Jharkhand. All through the efforts of a village teacher. The village has 70 Bhuiyan Dalit families, 14 Paswan Dalit families and further away, a large community of Patan Muslims. The Dalits had no land, and so they had to work as labourers in chimney brick kilns owned by entrepreneurs of other castes, without knowing they were being exploited in so many ways. This village teacher, Yugeshwar Ram, changed all that. He tells Tony Herbert, SJ how he managed to do it:

#### How did you get involved in this?

I was there to teach, but it was not easy, as the brick kilns so completely dominated the lives of the people. There must be 5 to 8 kilns in the area. The children would not come to school, they were there in the kiln, either doing the lighter work, or caring for their little siblings. Making bricks involves a whole family, not just an individual labourer. It is families who undertake to make the bricks, for a payment that comes at the end of the week. On the day after 'bazaar day' they would all stay at home and drink, any money they still had would go to buy liquor and eating meat. The parents were indifferent to the future of their kids. This situation affected the task I had been given - teaching them. It was highly discouraging.

#### So what did you do?

I learnt that there are these two dimensions to the dynamics of the kilns. One was the economics, the second was the mental slavery of our Dalits. The dynamics of the first is hidden and so it is hard to find, unless one digs deep. The second is a very visible passivity and submission that infuriates outsiders like me. Both were crucial to this system.

Looking at the economics, I

found that it was a form of bonded labour, just as the agriculture labourers used to be bonded in the old zamindari system. The zamindari system has been abolished, but it has been replaced by these kilns which feed the growth of our metropolitan centres.

very happy to give him an advance.

So when the new season begins around November, our dalit family starts working for their *malik*. The rates in this new season may have gone up (let's say by Rs. 200 per thousand bricks), but the repayment is calculated at the previous year's rate.



Interview with  
**the village teacher**  
*who transformed  
his dalit village  
in Jharkhand*

#### Tell us about the economics.

This is how the system worked. It centres on "dadani", or the giving of monetary advances. During the monsoon off-season, the labourer's family has little work but needs money and so asks the *malik* for an advance (*dadani*). This would be around Rs.2000 monthly, so for the six month off-season it comes to Rs. 12,000, but much more if there is sickness or a wedding, and the festivals of Karma and Durga Puja are times for extra expenditure. These advances commit the labourer to work for his *malik* for the next season, and to work only for this *malik*.

So when the season begins he works freely for the money-lender - not for his family. He is not motivated to work hard and to save for the future, because he knows he can, and will, fall back on his *malik* to give him an advance. 'Why work hard now? Let us face the next off-season when it comes.' And the *malik* is obviously

"I gave the advance last season, so you get last season's rate" is the assertive explanation given by the *malik*. This is how the *malik* makes a lot of money. There are approximately 50 families working, so you can calculate the profit he would make.

Our dalit family cannot go and work for another *malik* for this year's increased rate. It has to stick to this *malik* who gave them the money when they needed it. This dependence is the root of the mental slavery.

After the labourer pays back his *dadani* in, let us say, three months, he should be paid the new rate, but he does not know that his repayment is complete, so he keeps working at the old rate. Even if he does realize it, he will not raise the issue for fear that the *malik* will cut him off and deprive him of his patronage.

Another key factor is that the *malik* will not give the labourer full payment each week, he gives him something for basics, but says he's

holding back the rest saying, "You will waste it in liquor, so I will give the balance at the end of the season (which is several months off). The Dalit family is unable to calculate the amount over such a long period, and at season's end it thinks that any amount given is bounteous. When the *mushi* counts the bricks every week he may make wrong entires, but the labourer or his family wouldn't know they are being cheated.

So the victims are not even aware they are being cheated and their labour is exploited. They see the man who is unscrupulously exploiting them as a generous man who is concerned about them and helps them out when they need money.

#### What did you do?

A key factor was that I lived in the village as the teacher of the school run by our Mission which had been working here for many years. So people trusted me and accepted me. I mixed with people freely and made a lot of freinds. We would eat together, work together and had a lot of fun.

First I asked them to come for a meeting every Sunday morning. We had a one room school building. I would sit outside, stop them as they went past and ask them to attend the meeting. In the meeting we simply talked about all that happened in the village.

Next we started a saving scheme. Everyone had to pay Rs. 100 per person per week. When money accumulated a bit, we bought common things we needed for the community such as a drum, degchi, dari, gas light etc. No loans were allowed from this saved money. We insisted that they work every day, not just when they needed money. We had to change their way of thinking that if they had money that day they didn't have to work.

In one year with 52 members at Rs 400 each per month, the group collected approximately to Rs. 2,49,600. Then we opened a common

bank account, in the name of three men who were simple and straight and would not mess around with the money. We named our organization Dr. Ambedkar Mazdur Sangh, but did not register it.

As our first challenge to the system, we set to pay off their *dadani* before Holi, which was half way through the season. Bringing them out of their much-loved dependence on the malik - that was a big task.

Next we told everyone to go and ask the *mushi* for a statement of the number of bricks they had made, the amount of their *dadani* they had repaid, and the amount still left for repayment. When they started doing this together in numbers, the *mushi* became panicky. He realized something was going on and asked, 'Who is teaching you all this?'

Some of the men got their accounts, saw that their loans had been long repaid, and started demanding pay on the new rate, and their earnings increased. Some did not try to get their accounts, they remained in debt. All began to see the difference.

Next we proposed to stop all *dadani* from the kiln *malik*. If they needed an advance (loan), they could take it from the Sangh fund. Interest was 2 per cent, to be paid monthly, If it wasn't paid, it went up to 3 the next month, and to 4 the next. This increasing interest rate forced them to pay regularly the interest. The Sangh treasurer insisted on paying by cheque. Dealing with cheques and the bank on their own was an unbelievable confidence booster, leading to a change of mentality.

And then when we were well together and had got a grip on things, we then demanded a higher rate of pay for the bricks.

#### Was this an all-male effort?

When the men were organized and united, we started a women's group. We took up issues of health,

schooling, but not finance. The stress was on social bonding. Only later they we took up issues like saving.

Then there were the youth. They would be up before dawn, going off on tractors to load bricks or sand for construction work, relishing their youthful freedom, enjoying the thrill of a ride, of growing up and earning their own money, coming back exhausted at 8 p.m. to drink their tiredness away. When I questioned them they protested. I would explain to them patiently the detrimental effects of working so hard during the day and consuming alcohol at the end of the day. I encouraged them to go to a city for education or even learning some skills.

#### Did you face any opposition?

Plenty. The kiln *maliks* and their fellow caste people who lost a lot of income tried to spoil my reputation, by spreading false stories. The Bhuiyan Dalits with whom I lived were solidly with me. But the other Dalit community, 12 families of Paswan Dalits, opposed us. They think Bhuiyan Dalits are inferior to them. So they could not accept the changes in status quo brought about by our efforts. Their women left the group. I kept a watch over our people whom the malik's men tried to win over and my friendly approach made them slowly stop their games.

#### Have you achieved what you wanted to?

Well, there is no end. The struggle goes on. Sometimes our efforts are fruitful, sometimes they fail. But our people have risen to a new level - in their self-perception, their awareness of exploitation, handling their income, and saving for the future, understanding the need for educating their children etc. I was just consistently present among the people, working patiently to effect the changes. Now the children come to the school, and I am happy! ■

## Are women taking over REAP?



BY FRAZER MASCARENHAS, SJ

**G**overnments in India have long resorted to the strategy of forming Self Help Groups or SHGs in the move to empower women and so build stronger communities. These start with micro finance through monthly financial transactions between members, with the added support of banks, and extend to employment-generation activities, collective bargaining and action on behalf of the community. The slums of Mumbai house talented women, who are thus able to raise the standard

of living of their families, especially through enabling good education for their children.

While REAP (Reach Education Action Programme) works principally to strengthen the capacity of children in slums to take advantage of formal education, as per the vision of its founder, Dr Trevor Miranda, SJ. But he also had the vision to work with women to enable them to support their children's education.

In 2015-16, REAP animates 141 SHGs involving 2948 women, of which about 300 are tribal women, another 250 are from dalit communities and about half of the total number are from rural areas. It is interesting that about 30 groups have already become

independent of REAP, having gained confidence to manage on their own. REAP's groups are coordinated by Ms Sunita Mali – a dynamic grass-roots leader with a knack for networking, with the help of supervisors for the 5 zones: Dolkhamb, Shenva, Kalyan-Shahad, Kalwa and Ghatkopar. The groups meet twice a month, in the presence of the supervisor, to commit a sum of Rs 50 per person (and rising to Rs 200 for older groups) to the common pool, from which the members can draw loans at the rate of 2% per annum. In addition, the group draws loans from branches of the Bank of Maharashtra. In the last 2 years a total sum of Rs 3.5 crores were drawn as loans in the Kalyan and

Mumbai zones. In Dolkhamb during the last year Rs 9 lakhs were secured from the banks and these have all been repaid, with another Rs 21 lakhs borrowed this year. Paying back on time has its advantages – generating confidence for larger loans and escape from the clutches of the money-lenders with their 120% per annum rate of interest.

Cottage industries and other employment generation activities have also empowered the SHG members, with multiple products (like door mats, soap, agarbattis, artificial jewellery, candles etc) being manufactured at home and sold either within the local communities themselves or at malls and exhibitions. Mention must be made of 2 Lezim groups of 20 women each, who have earned Rs. 2.5 lakhs in the festival season of 2015. The production, use and sale of herbal remedies, introduced by Fr Diago D'Souza this year, have the potential to transform health care and also provide employment generation.

Government officials of the Central Board of Workers Education (CBWE) have been pleasantly surprised, over the last three years, at the huge response of REAP to their efforts on behalf of women. Between June and December 2015, the CBWE has conducted a total of 78 training sessions for a total of 3120 women of REAP's SHGs, disbursing Rs. 6,24,000/- at Rs 200/- per person as stipend directly to their bank accounts, while giving them 2-day, twice-a-year sessions on skills like glass and fabric painting, the production of incense-sticks, soap, candles, phenyl, showcase articles and bags – all for employment generation. Sessions on health awareness and legal issues complete the programme. Training is also offered to young women between the ages of 18 to 25

in personality development, career counselling and other relevant topics during a yearly over-night outing.

REAP believes in partnering with Government agencies (with remarkable success), to make schemes financed by public money effective and meaningful.

A lack of one's own resources need not cripple an organisation; REAP shows that networking with other groups is a viable option. It uses the premises and resources of Church institutions, Panchayats, Schools, Temples and Political Parties of all hues regularly in a non-partisan manner. REAP's SHGs receive complimentary training from the "You Respect Foundation", on health and personal hygiene, with 38 sessions conducted for 2314 women and 18 sessions on Women Trafficking for 675 women, by the organisation "Justice and Care" in the last 7 months of 2015. Women's India Trust (WIT) conducts free training in basic fashion designing for women of REAP's SHGs, followed by commercial orders for the products taught. WIT even lends its own training machines for the duration of the course and provides all the material. REAP also operates 3 Sakhi Centres (Dolkhamb, Kalyan and Ghatkopar) for skills' training in fashion designing and computers, with local resource persons.

Over the last year, REAP has experimented with well-equipped Entrepreneurship Centres - Femme Fabrika for stitching and embroidery and Kotton Kraft for bag-making, both sponsored by SALT LABS, and a Catering Service - Delicio, supported by the Gabriel Project in Mumbai (GPM). Training in production has been given to groups of women but the real challenge is in the marketing of products created on a large scale. Skills training and entrepreneurship

– isn't this, what the country needs?

Women in India generally do not feel comfortable dealing with the police. Not so our SHG members! In each zone, a Police Liaison Committee of 20 women have awareness and training sessions conducted by the local police, enabling women to easily approach the police for a solution to law and order problems. Similarly, a Cleanliness Committee in each zone is given training and support by the Nagar Sevak or Sarpanch in solving problems of local infrastructure and common services. It is not uncommon for our SHG members to take a delegation to the local self government offices to represent their concerns. Health awareness and medical camps, sometimes sponsored by the local political parties or NGOs, are held twice a year for diagnosis, medical treatment or further referral. Every March, the Tata Memorial Hospital has a free cancer checkup, which our SHG members take full advantage of. Last year 6 cases were detected, followed by referrals for treatment in the early stages.

Finally, 'all work and no play' does not make for a happy community. Cultural activities, including the celebration of Haldi-Kunku at Makar Sankranti, of Mahila Din (with sports, contests, gifts and interaction with an inspirational leader), of Savitri Phule Jayanti, Independence and Republic days and other local events, add colour to the lives of women who would otherwise be confined to the narrow walls of their dimly lit, smoke-filled homes in the slums. The women of REAP's Self Help Groups could claim that they have come into their own! And the movement spreads! ■

*(Frazer Mascarenhas, SJ (BOM) is one of the four Jesuits who now work for REAP. The other three are Frs. Diago and Consti and Br. Wellington)*

# Left, Right & Centre

*It's civil moderation that forms the very core of democracy*

BY GAUTAM ADHIKARI

**W**hat is left and what is right in today's world? Historically, from perhaps the mid-19th century the terms left and right entered political discourse. Before the turbulent times in Europe during that century, the fervent moralising that accompanies the expression of devotion to left or right was not evident.

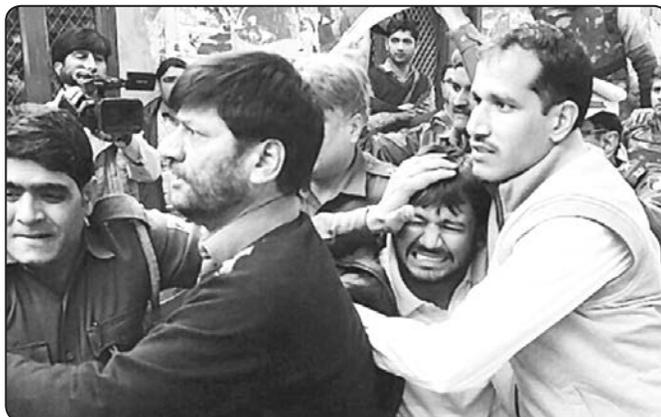
Today, some people are ready to kill for the righteousness of their cause.

Left and right today are moral stands. In fact, the dividing line between left and right across the world is not easy to delineate. What, for instance, might be seen as progressive in one political culture may be derided as 'bourgeois liberal' or reactionary in another; similarly, what is assumed to be conservative in, say, Britain could be seen as liberal in the US, where liberal is a synonym for the left.

Broadly speaking, it might be appropriate to describe today's worldwide political dividing line as one between extremism and moderation. Such a division prevails in several countries, including the world's largest two democracies, the US and India.

In the US, the line is stark in this presidential election year. At this early stage of the primary electoral process the extreme wings of both Republican and Democratic parties appear to be on the ascendant. Moderates are having a tough time holding their ground while radicals, especially on the right, stoke anger, resentment and even open hatred of political, religious and racial Others. Moderation and rational debate are for losers, they say.

Donald Trump, the leading Republican presidential aspirant, symbolises this viciousness, with Ted Cruz not far behind. On the Democratic side, such verbal violence is absent in the voices of the candidates, Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders. But Sanders, a rare socialist among American politicians, advocates a political revolution to realise the lofty promises he makes to youthful supporters of free healthcare and free college for all. Exactly what he means by revolution isn't clear but he implores people in their millions to rise against the "establishment" to upend a political system that he says



benefits only the rich. Not for him, nor for Trump, is the complexity of an inevitably deliberative democratic process any cause for moderation.

In India, extremism on the left, which in the Indian context means the communist left, is a fading phenomenon in politics though Marxism-Leninism remains a revered ideology in sections of the intelligentsia and academia. The CPM, never really a national presence nor a revolutionary party, is weak while Maoists are restricted in their activities to hilly and forested central India.

It is the extreme right which at this point of time is a big worry in India for those who still adhere to a vision of a Constitutionally-decreed secular and tolerant nation. Cultural

extremists roam as vigilantes in several parts of the country, with little regard for tolerance or any notion of what India might be beyond their religiously blinkered perceptions, while neither Prime Minister Narendra Modi nor his party's ideologues appear to be much bothered to restrain them.

At the same time, rising extreme nationalism, jingoism really, threatens to engulf rational, non-violent dissent. The very concept of civil moderation, so central to the idea of liberal democracy, is being eclipsed even in prominent sections of the media which should normally be an open platform of free debate. Moderation, alas, is hard to sell in these rapidly changing times.

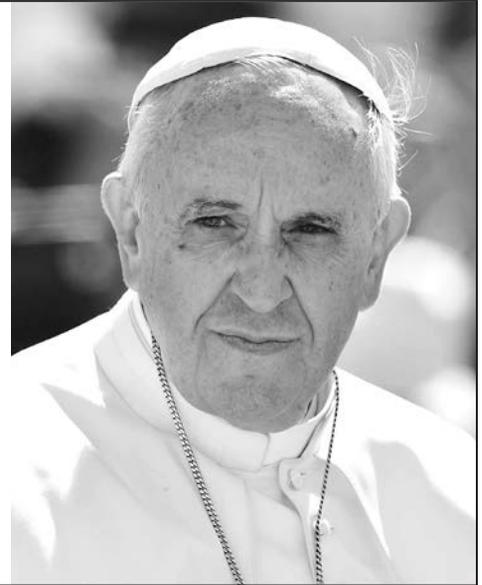
Scepticism, tolerance and reasoned discourse should be the three pillars on which democratic practice stands. Today, they are all under attack. Extremism doubtless has its place at the ends of the democratic spectrum; but a failure to challenge it vigorously soon will quite possibly help it

converge from both ends to occupy a central presence in political life in this age of virtually unrestrained social media, hate-spouting talk radio and cheap-to-produce and-grab-eyeballs talk television. To turn back the waves of extremism, democratic moderates must stand together in mature adulthood to persuade electorates to, one, vote in decisive numbers for balance and stability and, two, explain forcefully the inanity of extremism in a nonviolent democratic system, which ultimately forms the best option for political choice in an imperfect world. Moderation is not equidistance at an impartial centre away from right and left. It forms the very core of democracy. ■

*Courtesy: The Times of India*



**“A person who thinks only about building walls is not a Christian”**



*In his hour-long inflight news conference on his way from Mexico to Rome, Pope Francis touched on a wide range of hot-button topics, including immigration, pedophilia, the spread of the Zika virus and his meeting with Patriarch Kirill. In the 60 minute interview, the Pope answered 12 questions posed in English, Spanish and Italian. He also responded to Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump's criticism of his stance on immigration. Excerpts:*

**Holy Father, in Mexico there are thousands of “desaparecidos,” (disappeared) but the case of 43 students of Ayotzinapa is a painful crisis. Why didn't you meet with their families? What is your message for the families of thousands of the “desaparecidos.”**

If you read the messages attentively, I made reference continuously to the killings, the deaths, life taken by all of these narco-trafficking gangs and human smugglers. I spoke of this problem as one of the wounds that Mexico suffers. There was an attempt to receive one of these groups, and there were many groups, even opposed among themselves, with infighting, so I preferred to say that I would see all of them at the Mass in Juarez or at another Mass. It was practically impossible to meet all of these groups, which

were also fighting among themselves. It's a situation that I find difficult to understand, because I'm a foreigner, right? I think that even the Mexican society is a victim of all of this, of these crimes of “cleaning up” people, of discarding people. I spoke about it in four speeches and you can check them up. It's a great pain that I'm taking about, because this nation doesn't deserve such a tragedy.

**The subject of pedophilia in Mexico has very dangerous roots, very hurtful. The case of Fr Maciel left a strong mark, especially on the victims. The victims continue to feel unprotected by the Church. Many continue to be men of faith. Some are still even in the priesthood. I want to ask you, what do you think of it? Did you at any moment consider meeting the victims? In general when the abuse comes to light, these priests are simply moved to another parish, nothing more, isn't it?**

OK, I'm going to start with the second. First, a bishop who moves a priest to another parish when a case of pedophilia is discovered is a man without a conscience. The best thing he can do is to present his resignation. Is that clear?

Secondly, going back to the Maciel case, I want to honor the

man who fought even in moments when he had no strength. Cardinal Ratzinger deserves applause. (applause) Yes, applaud him. He had all of the documentation. He's a man who, as the prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, had everything in his hands. He conducted all the investigations, and went on and on and on, until he couldn't go any further. But, if you remember, 10 days before the death of St. John Paul II, in that Via Crucis of Holy Friday, he said to the whole Church that it needed to clean up the dirt of the Church. And in the Pro-Eligendo Pontefice Mass, despite knowing that he was a candidate, he wasn't stupid, he didn't care to “make-up” his answer, he said exactly the same thing. He was the brave one who helped so many open this door. So, I want to remember him because sometimes we forget about his hidden works that were the foundations for “taking the lid off the pot.”

Thirdly, we're doing quite a lot with the Cardinal Secretary of State, Pietro Parolin, and with the group of nine cardinal advisors. After listening, I decided to name a third secretary adjunct for the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith to take charge solely of these cases, because the Congregation isn't able to keep up with all the cases it already has.

Also, an appeals tribunal was

constituted by Monsignor Scicluna which is dealing with the cases of second instance when there are recourses.

Another thing that is working very well is the commission for the protection of minors. It's not exclusively devoted to cases of pedophilia, but the protection of minors. There, I spent an entire morning with six of them, two Germans, two British and two Irish. Abused men and women. Victims. And I also met with victims in Philadelphia. So we're working. But I thank God because the lid is off the pot, and we have to continue taking it off. We need to take conscious efforts.

And, the final thing I would like to say is that pedophilia by the clergy is a monstrosity, because a priest is consecrated to lead a child to God, and he eats him in a diabolical sacrifice. He destroys him.

**Today, you spoke very eloquently about the problems of immigration. On the other side of the border, there is a very tough electoral battle. One of the candidates for the White House, Republican Donald Trump, in an interview recently, said that you are a pawn, an instrument of the Mexican government for migration politics. Trump said that if he's elected, he wants to build 2,500 kilometers of wall along the border. He wants to deport 11 million illegal immigrants, separating families, etc. I would like to ask you, what do you think of these accusations against you and if a North American Catholic can vote for a person like Trump?**

Thank God he said I was a politician because Aristotle defined the human person as 'animal politicus.' At least I am a human person. As to whether I am a pawn, well, maybe, I don't know. I'll leave that to your judgment and that of the people. A person who thinks only about building walls, wherever they may be, and not building bridges, is not a Christian. This is not in the Gospel. As far as what

you said about whether I would advise to vote or not to vote for a candidate, I am not going to get involved in that. I say only that this man is not Christian, if he has said things like that. We must see if he said things in that way and in this I give him the benefit of the doubt.

**The meeting with the Russian Orthodox Patriarch Kirill and the signing of the joint declaration was greeted by the entire world as an historic step. ..Will you attend the Pan-Orthodox Council meeting?**

As for the Pan-Orthodox Council I will be present...spiritually. And with a message. I would like to go greet them there at the Pan-Orthodox synod. They are brothers, but I must respect them. But, I know that they want to invite Catholic observers and this is a good bridge, but behind the Catholic observers I will be praying with my best wishes that the Orthodox move ahead, because they are brothers and their bishops are bishops like us.

Then, Kirill, my brother. We kissed each other, embraced, and then a conversation for an hour (Fr Lombardi corrects: two hours.) Old age doesn't come on its own. (laughs) Two hours when we spoke as brothers, sincerely and no one knows what was spoken about, only what we said at the end publicly about how we felt as we spoke.

**Holy Father, for several weeks there's been a lot of concern in many Latin American countries and also in Europe regarding the Zika virus. The greatest risk would be for pregnant women. There is anguish. Some authorities have proposed abortion, or else to avoiding pregnancy. As regards avoiding pregnancy, on this issue, can the Church take into consideration the concept of "the lesser of two evils?"**

Abortion is not the lesser of two evils. It is a crime. It is to throw someone out in order to save another. That's what the Mafia does. It is a crime, an absolute evil. On the 'lesser evil,' avoiding

pregnancy, we are speaking in terms of the conflict between the fifth and sixth commandment. Paul VI, a great man, in a difficult situation in Africa, permitted nuns to use contraceptives in cases of rape. Don't confuse the evil of avoiding pregnancy by itself, with abortion. Abortion is not a theological problem, it is a human problem, it is a medical problem. You kill one person to save another. It's against the Hippocratic oath doctors must take. It is an evil in and of itself, but it is not a religious evil in the beginning, no, it's a human evil. Then obviously, as with every human evil, each killing is condemned. On the other hand, avoiding pregnancy is not an absolute evil. I would also urge doctors to do their utmost to find vaccines against these two mosquitoes that carry this disease. This needs to be worked on.

Holiness, you will soon receive the Charlemagne Prize, and that's the main European one. What do you say to Europe, which now seems to be falling to pieces, first with the crisis of the euro and now that of the refugees? Maybe you have a word for us in this situation of European crisis?

First, about the Charlemagne Prize. I had the habit of not accepting prizes or honors, but always, not out of humility, but because I don't like them. Maybe it's a little crazy, but it's good to have it, but I just don't like them. But in this case, I don't say I was forced, but Cardinal Kasper managed to convince me, because he was chosen by Aachen to convince me. And I said yes, but I said I will receive it in the Vatican. And I said I offer it for Europe, so that Europe may do what I desired at Strasburg; that it may no longer be "grandmother Europe" but "mother Europe." The other day while glancing through a newspaper I found a phrase that I liked. It was "the re-foundation of the European Union." I like this idea of the re-foundation of the European Union, maybe it can be done, because Europe - I do not say is unique, but it has a force, a culture, a history that cannot be wasted, and we must

do everything so that the European Union has the strength and also the inspiration to make it go forward. That's what I think.

**Some wonder how a Church that claims to be merciful, how can the Church forgive a murderer easier than someone who has divorced and remarried?**

I like this question! On the family, two synods have spoken. The Pope has spoken on this all year in the Wednesday Catechisms. The question is true, you posed it very well. In the post-synod document that will be published, perhaps before Easter – it picks up on everything the synod spoke about the conflicts, wounded families and the pastoral care of wounded families. It is one of the concerns. Another is the preparation for marriage. Imagine, to become a priest there are eight years of study and preparation, and then if after a while you can't do it, you can ask for a dispensation, you leave, and everything is OK. On the other hand, for the sacrament of marriage), which is for your whole life, three to four conferences... Preparation for marriage is very important. It's very, very important because I believe it is something that the Church, at least in my country, in South America, the Church has not valued much. Some years ago in my homeland there was a habit, something called 'casamiento de apuro,' It was a marriage in haste because the baby is coming and so quickly arranged to save the honor of the family. They weren't free. Such a marriage is null. As a bishop I forbade my priests to do this. When there was something like this, I would tell the priests, 'Let the baby come, let them continue as fiancées, and when they feel like they can continue for the rest of their lives, then they could go ahead. There is something missing there.

Another interesting thing from the meeting with families in Tuxtla. There was a couple, married again in second union integrated into the pastoral ministry of the Church. The

key phrase used by the synod, which I'll take up again, is 'integrate' in the life of the Church the wounded families, remarried families, etc. We mustn't forget the children in the middle. They are the first victims, both in the wounds, and in the conditions of poverty, of work, etc.

**Does that mean they can receive Communion?**

This is the last thing. Integrating with the Church doesn't mean receiving communion. I know married Catholics in a second union who go to church, who go to church once or twice a year and say 'I want communion', as if joining in Communion were an award. It's a work towards integration, all doors are open, but we cannot say, 'from here on they can have communion.' This would be an injury also to marriage, to the couple, because it wouldn't allow them to proceed on this path of integration.

**Numerous media have made a lot of noise about the intense correspondence between John Paul II and the Polish American philosopher, Ana Teresa Tymieniecka, who had a great affection for each other. In your viewpoint, can a Pope have such an intimate relationship with a woman? Have you had such an experience?**

I already knew about this friendship between St. John Paul II and this philosopher when I was in Buenos Aires. It was known. Also her books are known. John Paul II was a restless man. I would say that a man who does not know how to have a relationship of friendship with a woman – I'm not talking about misogynists, who are sick – well, he's a man who is missing something. And in my own experience, when I ask for advice, I would ask a collaborator, a friend. I would also like to hear the opinion of a woman, because women have such wealth. They look at things in a different way. I like to say that women are those who form life in their wombs. They have

this charism of giving you things you can build with. A friendship with a woman is not a sin. It's a friendship. A romantic relationship with a woman who is not your wife, that is a sin. Understand? The Pope is a man. The Pope needs the input of women, too. And the Pope, too, has a heart that can have a healthy, holy friendship with a woman. There are saint-friends – Francis and Clare, Teresa and John of the Cross. Don't be frightened. We have not understood the good that a woman can do for the life of a priest and of the Church in the form of counsel, help of a healthy friendship.

**You spoke many times during this trip about dreaming – what do you dream about? And what is your nightmare?**

China (laughs). I would like to go there. In Mexico, they speak 65 languages. The people have a great faith. They have also suffered religious persecution. There are martyrs. You cannot explain this wealth, this history, this joy, the capacity to celebrate amid these tragedies that you have asked about. If a people can still be together with all these, it can only be explained with Guadalupe. And I invite you to seriously study the facts of Guadalupe. The Madonna is there. I cannot find another explanation. And it would be nice if you as journalists read the books that explain the painting here and its significance. That is how you can understand better this great and beautiful people.

**You were there for a long time in the chapel praying to Our Lady of Guadalupe. What did you ask Our Lady of Guadalupe?**

I prayed for the world, for peace, so many things. I asked for forgiveness, I prayed that the Church grows healthy, I prayed for the Mexican people. And I prayed that priests be true priests, and sisters true sisters, and bishops true bishops. I can't tell you more, for the things a child tells his mother are a secret. ■

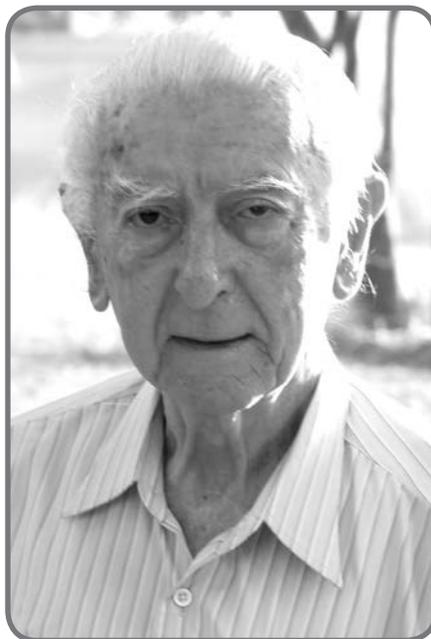
*Courtesy: www.catholicnewsagency.com*

**F**r Luis Bermejo was born on 23 March 1929. He grew up in San Sebastian, Spain, and studied there in a school run by the Marianists. For his University studies he enrolled in Deusto University, Bilbao. During the first year, the students were taken as per custom, to the Castle of Loyola for a retreat. It was there that he experienced the call of God. So far he had never thought of becoming a Jesuit. On the fifth day of the retreat, he went into the refectory for lunch. The reading at table was about the missions and listening to the heroic work of the missionaries he was irrevocably touched. The Luis who came out of the refectory that afternoon was a different man.

In September 1947 he joined the novitiate and 4 years later was sent on a mission to India. First, however, he had to go to Kandy, Sri Lanka, to study philosophy for 3 years and theology for 1 year. Then when the Kandy seminary was shifted to Pune in 1955, he came along with the other students. The staff of the Papal Athenaeum (now JDV) became aware of Fr Bermejo's intellectual acumen and so invited him to become a professor of theology. After his ordination on 24 March, 1957, and final year of theology, he did his tertianship in Kodaikanal. After this he did his post-graduate studies for one year at St. Mary's College, Kurseong, and 1 year in Rome at the Gregorian University which conferred on him his doctorate.

He started teaching systematic theology at JDV in 1961 and continued doing so for the next 30 years. He was also the Dean of Studies from 1965 to 1971 in Poona, now Pune. About his teaching the present Bishop of Pune, Thomas Dabre, wrote: "He was my professor and I was proud to be his student. He was clear and pointed in his teaching. His theological books indicate that his theology was world class". Fr Francis Parmar, Provincial of Gujarat wrote, "I am a witness to his

## A Scholar with a passion for truth



**Luis Bermejo, SJ**  
1929-2016

popularity as a teacher and thinker. He was not afraid to perform his duties as a theologian, namely, to make the Church think and understand itself in newer ways."

What kind of person was Fr Bermejo? He had a passion for truth, therefore his curiosity both about mundane things as well as theological questions was boundless. He was always asking questions. He was very fond of Church History to find out the Truth. In one of his early books, the questions he raised must have raised some ecclesiastical eyebrows, with the result that the Prefect of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith in Rome asked him to stop

teaching. He obeyed. He was then summoned to Rome by the then Fr General to continue his research and writing there. The fruit of his writing over his life time was 19 or 20 books. Bishop emeritus of Pune, Vally D'Souza, wrote: "I am immensely indebted to Fr Bermejo for my spiritual and theological growth through his books."

Fr Bermejo was a scholar and therefore a loner so that he could read, think, and write. He was not afraid to criticize opinions of others which he perceived to be wrong. Sometimes, however, his own theological opinions were called into question.

Being a loner did not imply being aloof. He had warm friendships with a number of the staff members who comforted him when he was obliged to stop teaching. He never missed daily Mass unless he was sick. He always made his own annual retreat even if he had given a retreat of 30 days to others in the same year. In fact, he gave about 60 thirty day retreats.

Around 2002 Fr Bermejo longed to come back to India from Rome. He wrote to the Rector of De Nobili about his desire to settle down there. Fr Rector wrote back: "Come". And so he was back here for 13 more years giving retreats or writing books until he felt that he could no longer write effectively. He was happy here and the students enjoyed his presence.

During the course of last year he began to lose his short term memory. More recently he appeared to be confused on occasions. His appetite declined. However his death in the early hours of 30 January was still unexpected.

Fr George Pattery, POSA, wrote: "He died as he lived". Though he was alone in his room at the moment of his death he was really 'Alone with God Alone' – the title of one of his books. The staff and students made his funeral Mass beautiful and meaningful.

- Theodore Bowling, SJ

## ELISEUS RICHARD ASHISH, SJ

(PAT) 1950 - 2016



Born: 02.09.1950. Entered the SJ: 14.08.1968 Ordained: 21.04.1981. Final Vows: 08.09.1989.

Apostolic Assignments: Asst. Pastor, Nawada: 1982-83. Dean of Studies, Minor Seminary, Dibra, Patna: 1983-84. Teacher, K.R. High School, Bettiah; 1984-1986. Hostel Superintendent, K.R., Bettiah: 1988-91. Minister, St. Michael's, Patna; 1991-92. Headmaster, Ara Catholic High School, Ara: 1992-96. Vice-Principal, St. Xavier's, Patna: 1997-98. Co-Pastor, Kurji Parish, Patna; 1998-2008. Writer, St. Xavier's, Patna: 2008-2016.

Deep interior life and quality contribution to Hindi Catholic literature are the two major aspects of the life of Fr Ashish and these two were well-integrated. His experiences of teaching Hindi to Novices and Juniors for two years at XTTI, a decade-and-a-half in education ministry and a decade in pastoral ministry were rich resources that nourished the two major aspects of his life.

One of his first works in Hindi was translating the book of a great spiritual master, Fr Tony D'Mello, SJ, Wellsprings into Hindi as Jivanth Jal in 2008; this translation work called for a familiarity with the inner world of humans. Fr Ashish's 80-page Sant Paulus – Ek Parichay (St Paul – An Introduction), published in 2008, is a summary presentation of the theology of St Paul in a simple language that even ordinary people can understand; this was the fruit of his deep research into the person of St Paul and his theology. The assistance he provided to Fr Jeorme Durack, SJ to edit his manuscripts Yesu Samaji Dhanya Peter Faber Ki Jivani (Life of Jesuit Blessed Peter Faber, 2010) and Pavitra Hirday Ka Sacha Mitra – Sant Claude La Colombiere (True Friend of the Sacred Heart – St Claude La Colombiere, 2012) showed Fr Ashish's ability to delve deep into the lives of saints to and bring out their interior beauty. Fr Ashish's penetrating insights into the Bible have found expression in his Hindi translation of the New Testament, which is in the press now.

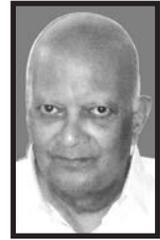
In an affectionate manner it could be said that Fr Ashish was like the proverbial coconut – hard on the outside, but soft, gentle, sweet and nourishing on the inside. He was a person of inner beauty, rhythm and faithfulness; hence, though some found certain aspects of his behavior difficult to understand, most of those who came to know him closely experienced God in Fr Ashish – in his person, thoughts and relationships. Through his formation, education, pastoral and writing ministries he gained many friends and admirers. Though diabetics and a few other ailments reduced his energy level in the last decade of his life, Fr Ashish served God with filial devotion and impeccable loyalty to the Church and Society of Jesus.

He was admitted in Kurji Holy Family Hospital, Patna on 24 January 2016 after he fell on the steps at the entrance of St Xavier's, Patna. Though he was conscious for a few minutes after the fall, soon he began vomiting, went into a coma and did not regain consciousness thereafter. At the suggestion of the neuro-physician, Fr Ashish was taken to Udayan Hospital, Patna on 26 Jan '16. The CT scan showed that Fr Ashish had suffered a massive brain hemorrhage. The Lord welcomed his priest-servant into the heavenly abode at 9.25 am on 30 Jan '16.

- Susai Raj, SJ

## FRANKLIN DE SOUZA, SJ

(GOA) 1932 - 2016



The bell has rung for the morning assembly in the midst of the usual hustle and bustle there is a hush! One wonders what has happened– there emerging from the Principal's office is "he" walking straight, spick and span to the mike. The words are crisp and slow, the message is clear. Rather than the words, it is the appearance of the man that makes the message ring clear and true – 'we now start the day's work, and we apply ourselves as best as we can'.

This is how Jivit described Franklin as Headmaster of the Our Lady of Our Lady of Grace, Bicholim for a total of 16 years.

Franklin was born at Raia, Goa, studied at Vincent's, Pune and then Loyola, Margao. He joined the Society in 1950 at Vinayalaya, did his Juniorate and was sent to Braga, Portugal for Philosophy. On his return he did his BA in Hindi at Ranchi University, perhaps the only member of the Goa Mission to graduate in that discipline. After being ordained he worked in schools till his retirement. Then he was appointed Hostel Director in Ajara for 20 long years. It was here, that Franklin gave free rein to all his principles and as a result a number of vocations to Religious Life, to the armed forces, to government service and self-employment resulted. At Ajara he developed a taste for pastoral work and was assigned to Bom Jesus Basilica.

At Old Goa, Franklin began to experience increasing blindness and was transferred to St. Britto Residence, Mapusa as he required regular assistance. For over a year he was bedridden while he continued with his mission - "to intercede for the Church and for the Society", till he suddenly and quietly slipped into the Lord's loving embrace on 06 Feb.

- Gregory Naik, SJ

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## Terrified of falling in love

I liked your little editorial in February's Jivan, and by a coincidence it landed here on Valentine's Day. So appropriate!

Just one thing: when you write..." I thought of this young friend when I tried to fathom what could ail some of us Jesuits. It's simple. We have fallen out of love...." you've touched a chord which resonates.

True. We Jesuits have fallen out of love, and as the song says, " - now we're only falling apart." We're no longer young and eager to risk, as in the days of Ignatius, Xavier, De Nobili and Lievens, when Europe was bursting with energy. Now we worry about "what will people say ?"

Today we're dull, middle-aged, and can only keep muttering, "but that's not in our culture". We're even terrified of falling in love because we fear a heart attack !

What will it take to change us completely? The Gospels have the answer: persecution.

- Myron J. Pereira, SJ  
Mumbai - 400 001

## More documents?

Permit me a few comments on Hector D'Souza's cover feature in the February '16 issue of Jivan.

We have enough documents, decrees, laws and directions to be put into practice. But their wisdom has not become our own. So do we need more documents from the coming GC? I think the 'Restructuring commissions' will come up with more directions to put into practice the existing laws. Fr General's letter calls us to conversion, to change. Jesus called on Peter to care for and tend his lambs if love prevails. He calls us to keep his commandment of love. But the crucial question is: Has this principle been followed in recruitment, formation and status upgrade? If not why? In the African Province where I was applicatus the Novice Master was in charge of 16 novices. In 2 months only 2 survived!

- Ranjit Yawu, SJ  
Sri Lanka

## Something beautiful to do at home on Holy Thursday

Many of our goals are shared goals, and call for collaborative effort. Through celebrations we re-appropriate our goals and commit ourselves to be co-pilgrims. Without this our celebrations deteriorate and become empty rituals. They not only involve a lot of useless investment of time, money and energy, but also end up by becoming counter-productive. Then they alienate us from our real goals. Hence it is good now and then to reflect on our celebrations.

What are we celebrating? Why are we celebrating? How are we celebrating?

Before his death Jesus enacted two parables in the presence of his disciples. In the Synoptic account he gave them bread and wine as symbols of his total self-giving to them.

In John's Gospel, the same message is conveyed through the washing of feet. This year onwards, we will have the feet of males and females washed during the liturgy of Holy (Maundy) Thursday. This

will make our celebration more inclusive and thus bring out better the mind and heart of Jesus. But wish to be inclusive can and should go beyond the boundaries of our liturgy. Allow me to make a suggestion.

After the Holy Thursday liturgy we all return home. Every Catholic family invites a few children from its neighbourhood to their house. In choosing these children the preference must be given to the poorer kids, and the family must try its best to have children from different religious backgrounds. When they are all together, an elderly person tells them what Jesus did. He loves all of us, and he wishes that we all live as his sisters and brothers. There could be the reading from John's Gospel, some simple hymns that all can sing and some intercessory prayers. This will be followed by a simple meal that all the guests and the members of the host family have together. One or two capable persons could see to the serving during the meal.

- Fr Subhash Anand  
Udaipur - 313 001



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(sd)  
Jerry Sequeira, SJ

# Lessons for Life

## *I've learned from London*

BY ROY ALEX, SJ

### **Respect for the rules:**

When my superior asked me about driving, I told him that I am afraid to drive in this country because here the people follow the traffic rules strictly. People from all walks of life are willing to observe the rules here and it is quite interesting to see how the parents train their small children to follow the traffic rules on the road. Though I tried to cross the road when there was a red light in the beginning of my life here, I patiently wait for the green light now.

### **Cleanliness:**

Thousands of tourists flock to London every day from all over the world and millions of Londoners move in and through the city, yet the city looks neat and tidy always. After coming to this beautiful city I am very careful even not to drop a small piece of paper on the road as I see small kids search for dustbins to drop the chocolate wrappers.

### **Passion for Reading:**

I see bookshops at every nook and corner of this city and they are crowded with book lovers who search for their favourite books. It is quite interesting to see people crouched over their books especially in the overcrowded underground trains in London.

### **Concern for the Nature:**

London is one of the greenest cities in the world. It has 35,000 acres of public green spaces. What amazed me is that the remarkable cooperation from the people to maintain the beauty of these spaces. They truly love nature and the serenity it brings. Therefore they really care for it and contribute to its protection in whatever way possible.

### **Sense of Humour:**

British are well known for their sense of humour especially their ability to poke fun at themselves. However it was very difficult for me in the beginning to understand the joke behind the loud laughter. The humour here is subtle and they play with words. Thank God, I am able to enjoy the jokes

*Roy Alex, SJ (KER) is doing his second year of theology at Heythrop College, University of London.*



now. It makes our community life relaxed and happy.

### **Politeness:**

It is something that I experience daily and cherish in all my encounters with the members of my community here. They are always polite in their dealings and it is from here that I learned how politely one can speak in English. After seeing how policemen in India act, I was amazed by the politeness and gentle approach of the police here, even when they are dealing with most difficult situations.

### **Commitment:**

People are very serious about what they do. No matter what they do they commit themselves to it. I haven't seen anybody in our college office sitting idle doing nothing or busy with their personal mobile phone during the office hours. If they are studying or going for daily exercises they do it without any compromise. It is something that challenges me.

### **Care and Love:**

Though I am far away from my own province and my home country I feel at home here due to the loving care of my Jesuit companions here. I think the British would be one of the most caring societies in the world. There is an abundance of charitable and voluntary organizations. Their aims and efforts, I believe, are unparalleled.

### **Being a creative student:**

The higher education in U.K. shattered my traditional understanding of university education of learning by heart and writing what I memorized in the examination. Here the University education challenges me to reflect and read more about what I learned in the classrooms. It leads me to serious reflection, research and study.

### **Being a Cosmopolitan:**

Coming from Kerala in India I had to adapt myself to the life and culture of a cosmopolitan city that is home for a very wide mix of cultures, lifestyles and languages. It was a great challenge for me in the beginning. However living with Jesuits from different nationalities and interactions with others outside the community broadened my outlook. It challenged me to happily accept all the differences related to nationality, religion and culture. ■



# GREEN COVER

## AADI – Attapadi Adivasi Development Initiatives

'Kambalam' is an age-old Adivasi celebration of Attapadi Region, Kerala to launch cultivation every year. The celebration died out some years ago as the Adivasi way of life, culture and customs dwindled with the influx of outsiders. At the inauguration of the Jesuit house and Eco education facilities at Aadi, Kambalam was celebrated once again in 2012.

The whole village is invited to start cultivation. Mother Earth is worshipped with a Puja. Then some dig the land and sow seeds, others sing and dance, while some cook! They flow from one activity to another till they sow all the plots. A common meal with drinks ends the celebration.

Attapadi was a tropical, lush green mountain range of teak and other giant trees in Palakad Dt., Kerala. Plunder of the forest in the 60's, mainly for timber, brought in hordes of plains-people. By the 90's the Adivasi way of life was all but destroyed.

In 2009 Kerala Jesuits bought some 25 acres of hilly land in Attapadi, to set up a Technical School or college for Adivasi Development. When that did not materialize, they decided to convert the land into a bio-diversity reserve. Fr James Morais, a pioneer of the Adivasi Mission at Attapadi, set up AADI in 2009.

Groups of school/college students come to AADI for Eco camps - from Kerala, Tamilnadu, even from Bihar. A yearly Tarumitra (friends-of-trees) festival attracts hundreds of students and teachers. Children celebrate Mother Earth with diverse ecological activities to increase their environmental awareness and commitment.

Attapadi forests had many wild animals, especially elephants. Settlers from the plains replaced forests with farms. Rivers shrank with irrigation. Elephants, hungry and thirsty in their own habitat, often raided farms. To mitigate this animal-human conflict, AADI set up two large water tanks, at ground-level. The elephants discovered them, and now frequent it, sometimes spending a whole night.

Fr James Morais promotes Adivasi Vaidyas, providing them a place to practice their herbal medicines. Fr T.S. Antony, SJ, his companion, understands and vibrates with the Adivasis and their culture. His grasp and use of their languages, songs and dances is a strong affirmation of their culture. AADI is a venture to sustain and revive Adivasi culture.

- Rappai Poothokaren, SJ



# MOMENTS



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Life stands before me like an eternal spring  
with new and brilliant clothes.

- *Carl Friedrich Gauss*